Noli enjoys edge as GMA's running mate, says Joe de V

Story on PAGE A2

With or without me, Poe will win–Estrada

WHAT, ME WORRY?

By Armand N. Nocum

TAKE it from actor and presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr.'s bosom buddy.

"With or without me, [Poe] will win. So, I'm not worried," said ousted President Joseph Estrada,

WITH/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- Gas fumes kill 191 in China
  WORLD/A9
- 'Cracker victims are youngsters, says DOH
  METRO/A15
- More NPA attacks seen despite peace efforts
  NEWS /A5

Iran earthquake kills thousands

'Devastation beyond imagination'

LANDSLIDES draw a picture of devastation in the coastal community of Liloan town in Southern Leyte.

JANI ARNAIZ/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

TEHRAN—An earthquake may have killed as many as 10,000 people when it devastated a city in southeast Iran early Friday, an Iranian legislator told The Associated Press after speaking to officials on the scene.

Hasan Khoshrou said a survey undertaken by helicopter indicated that over 60 percent of Bam's houses had been destroyed. The devastation was "beyond imagination," he reported local officials as telling him.

The earthquake of magnitude 6.3 hit Bam, a city of 80,000 people, at 5:28 a.m. Iranian time (0158 GMT), state television reported. Its epicenter was outside Bam, a popular tourist destination about 1,000 km southeast of the capital Tehran.

"The quake hit the city when most of the people were in bed, raising fears that the death toll may go higher," said Khoshrou, who spoke to the AP from Kerman province. He is one of the province's representatives in parliament.

A senior official from Kerman province, where Bam is situated, told Reuters in Tehran by telephone that there were only 2,000 confirmed fatalities, but he added "the number is sure to rise,"

The governor of Kerman province, Mohammad Ali Karimi, said: "The death toll is very high."

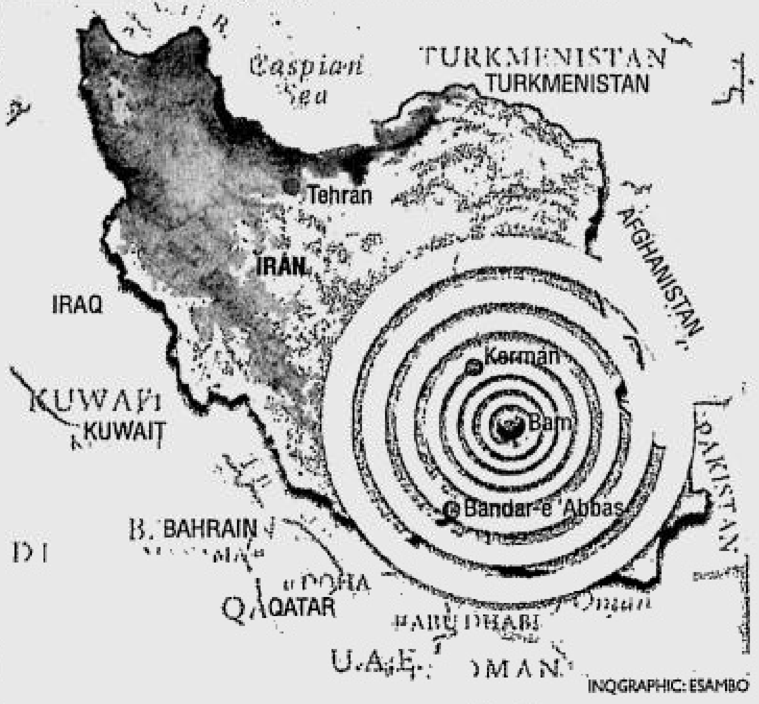
"Many people are buried under the rubble," Karimi told state television. Later he told state radio: "We do not have any precise information. What is certain is that the old structure of the city has been totally destroyed."

Hardly any buildings in Iran are built to withstand earthquakes, although the country sits on several major faultlines and temblors are frequent.

State media said two of Bam's hospitals collapsed, crushing many of the staff, and the remain-

IRAN/ A8

6.3 MAGNITUDE



INQGRAPHIC: ESAMBO

GMA steps into controversy over relief goods distribution

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) to directly coordinate with the local governments in the distribution of relief goods to landslide victims in Southern Leyte, "without regard for any partisan influence."

"Let us not turn human tragedies into political opportunities," she said in a statement. "Let us focus on sincere and selfless efforts to alleviate the plight of the victims."

The President issued the order following an INQUIRER report on Thursday that politicians were interfering in the distribution of the relief goods in San Francisco town.

According to the report, aides of Rep. Aniceto Saludo insisted that the goods be placed at the disposal of Mayor Diego Yuboc, his political ally, instead of the vice mayor, Bonifacio Amarga Jr., who is with Gov. Rosette Lerias.

As the victims continue to struggle to recover from the landslides and flooding that struck San Francisco and the nearby towns of Liloan and San Ricardo, a political war has erupted between Saludo and his arch-rival, Lerias, dragging even San Francisco parish priest Edmund Resus into the controversy.

Reached by mobile phone from Cebu City, Saludo yesterday denied that he tried to gain political mileage out of the disaster after pushing that the distribution of relief goods be coursed through

GMA/ A8

Storm 'Zigzag' brings new landslide threat

A TROPICAL depression is again threatening Eastern Visayas, including Southern Leyte, even as villagers in the disaster-stricken province have yet to recover from landslides and floods that left an estimated 200 people dead or missing, the weather bureau and civil defense office yesterday warned.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) yesterday said the storm, codenamed "Zigzag," with maximum sustained winds of 55 kph near the center, was spotted 510 km east of Virac, Catanduanes, at 10 a.m. Friday.

Maintaining a westward direction at a speed of 11 kph, Zigzag is forecast to be 320 km east of Virac this morning and 50 km southeast of the Catanduanes capital on Sunday morning.

Retired Brig. Gen. Melchor Rosales, administrator of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and executive officer of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), advised residents in low-lying areas, as well as those near mountains in Eastern Visayas and Bicol, to be on high alert against flash floods and landslides.

Rosales said a similar warning had been issued in Central Visayas, although Storm Signal No. 1 had only been raised in Eastern Visayas and Bicol.

STORM / A6

Explosives expert dies while defusing bomb

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A powerful blast near the Jolo Airport yesterday killed a military explosives expert and wounded another soldier, military officials said.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapching, chief of the Army's 104th Infantry Brigade based in Sulu, identified the fatality as MSgt. Nestor Escobido of the Army Support Command. He was assigned to the Philippine Air Force.

The wounded was identified as a certain Sergeant Tagulera, also of the ASC.

Col. Susulan Salapuddin, deputy chief of the brigade, said Escobido and Tagulera were called in after someone informed authorities about a male suspect placing boxes close to the Department of Public Works and Highways building near the airport runway.

Salapuddin said the boxes yielded containers filled with still a liquid explosive with wires attached to it.

EXPLOSIVES / A6

Victims of CPP purge narrate tales of torture

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

(Second of five parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

IN BROAD daylight on Nov. 19, 1985, three men believed to be from the military seized an assistant of an assemblyman at gunpoint in the office of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines on Edsa in Quezon City, according to a newspaper report the next day.

Three ex-members of the Communist Party of the Philippines said the abductors turned out to be members of the New People's Army hunting down suspected military spies from Mindanao, who were believed to have infiltrated the underground movement. The NPA is the party's armed wing.

The abduction of Dave Barrios—who, according to two of his ex-comrades, was an economics graduate of the University of the Philippines and member of a group in Metro Manila supporting the guerrilla war in Mindanao—was not typical of the methods used by the NPA in arresting suspected military spies during the party's anti-infiltration campaigns in the 1980s.

Many cadres were lured by invitations to an emergency meeting, a conference, a cultural presentation, or an exposure program in a guerrilla zone, survivors of the anti-infiltration campaigns said in interviews with the INQUIRER. *(See sidebar)*

Once they were inside an NPA camp, they experienced the horrors of imprisonment, torture and, for some, death.

"We are arresting you in the name of the party because you're a DPA (deep-penetration agent)" was what a cadre was told by the leader of the team that arrested him in a camp in Quezon.

Survivors said prisoners were stripped of their rights, setting the stage for maltreatment. The hands and feet of the prisoners in the anti-infiltration campaigns "Operation Missing Link" (OPML) and "Kampanyang Ahos" were bound with chains secured with padlocks.

The prisoners were held in wooden "tiger" cages (4 x 6 x 6 feet) or were bound to a hut without walls

VICTIMS/ A6

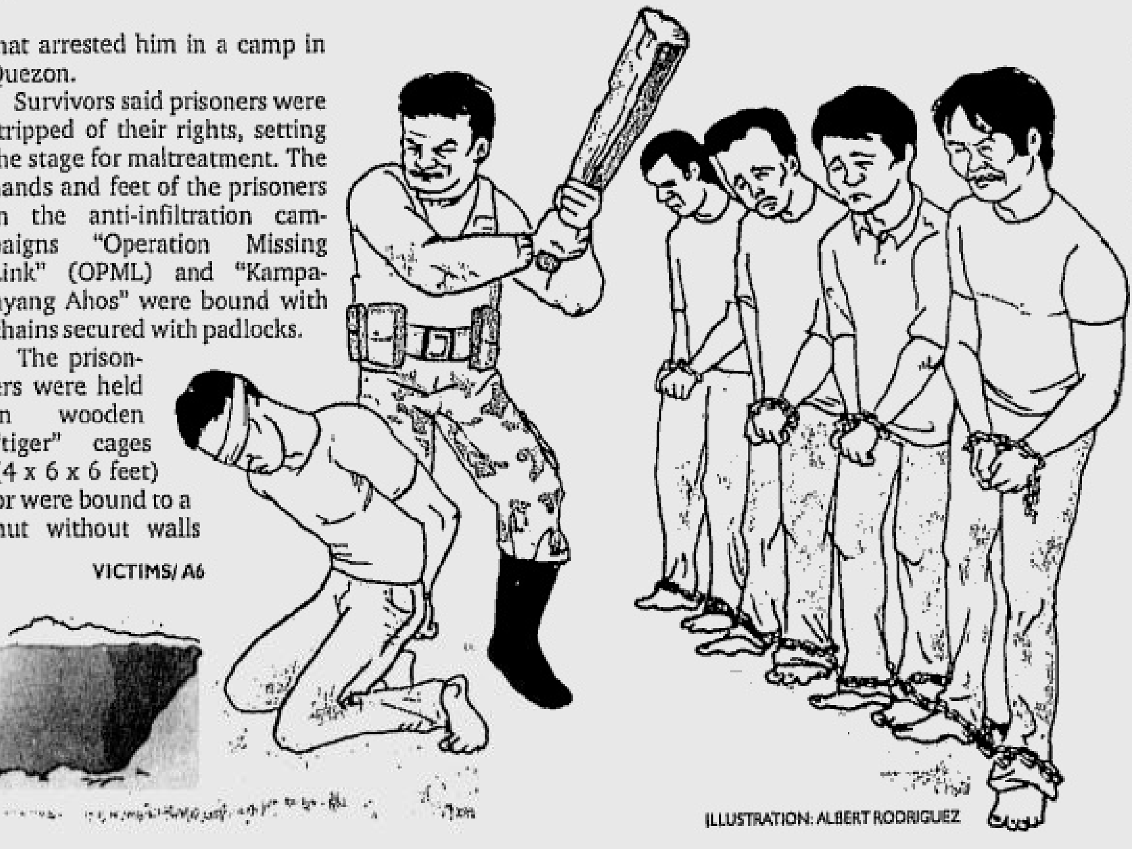


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

'Please tell them that I'm innocent'

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is a first-person account of Gil Navarro, a survivor of "Operation Missing Link." He has since left the underground movement.)

IT BEGAN with an invitation to a labor conference in a guerrilla zone.

Our group of five reached a New People's Army camp in Laguna on July 1, 1988, after taking a circuitous route that took us to McDonald's in Ayala Alabang, to San Pablo City, to Liliw, and to Sta. Cruz.

I was then 26 and the secretary of the Communist Party of the Philippines' section organizing committee in Calamba, Laguna.

At about 8 p.m. in Bai, Cavinti, we were made to sit in front of Dex and Aris at a small

PLEASE/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2003

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol Region and Eastern Visayas will have rains and occasional gusty winds. Extreme Northern and the rest of Eastern Luzon, rest of Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rains. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy.
SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/27/03

Second FRONTPAGE

Noli has edge as GMA's veep

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia Jr. confirmed that Sen. Noli de Castro is the favored running mate of President Macapagal-Arroyo and that a formal announcement would be made in a few days.

"I think we are now in the final stages of discussion. We are moving forward towards a formal status," he told reporters during his advanced birthday celebration on Christmas day in his house in Dasmariñas Village where he had the President as special guest.

Asked if the "final stages" concern the choice of De Castro, De Venecia said the choice was down to two: the independent De Castro and administration Sen. Robert Barbers.

He said the other choices considered were Sen. Loren Legarda, the reported running mate of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr., ex-Sen. Raul Roco who has rejected Malacañang's overtures, and Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

But De Venecia admitted that between Barbers and De Castro, the latter has the inside track.

"I would say in excess of 50-50," he said when asked the percentage of the possibility that it would be De Castro.

Barbers, who was present during the birthday dinner, said he had not been given any signal yet by the President about her preference.

Barbers, who had been vocal about his desire to be the President's running mate, said he avoided talking with the President that night because she might think he was trying to put pressure on her. Barbers stood in one corner of the main dining room while the President chatted with guests.

Asked when he expects the President to announce his choice of running mate, Barbers said he had no idea.

The President, accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, spent more than an hour in De Venecia's house on Thursday night talking with De Venecia, his wife Gina and a mixture of politicians and diplomats.

Among those who turned up were Sen. Edgardo Angara and his wife Gloria. The President shook hands with the couple.

Angara heads the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino that would carry Poe's candidacy but the faction led by Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino is pushing for the candidacy of Sen. Panfilo Lacson. Lacson's camp had also accused Angara of acting as a Palace agent trying to sow disunity in the opposition.

De Venecia had this explanation for Angara's presence in his dinner attended mostly by administration members, diplomats, show business and media personalities: "He is a friend and we are pushing the campaign for constitutional change."

Sen. Loren Legarda, who is rumored to be Poe's running mate, also arrived at the dinner but after the President left at 8 p.m. Senate President Franklin Drilon, chair of the Liberal Party which has yet to declare its support to the President's candidacy, also attended the dinner with his wife Mila.

PRESIDENCY 101

FPJ getting crash course on poll issues

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE MOVIE king has been enrolled in Presidency 101.

The standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, Fernando Poe Joe, is now in the thick of preparations for the 2004 presidential campaign.

According to Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Poe was literally burning the midnight oil, studying issues that affect the national interest amid criticisms that he would have a hard time addressing them on the campaign trail.

While everyone was on a holiday mood during the Christmas break, Poe was reading relevant materials and consulting with key people knowledgeable of the affairs of the state.

Come election time, Poe would have sharpened his grasp of the issues, said Pimentel.

"In other words, he would be more prepared. The actor is diligently honing his grasp of issues in the coming elections and he's expected to firm up his stand on them as the campaign starts."

Pimentel said he got this impression when he met with Poe on Dec. 18 and presented to him a draft vision of government for the united opposition.

"Poe is out to prove that he is his own man and he is independent-minded. I think FPJ is embarking on a different path than what his bosom buddy, deposed President Joseph Estrada, (had taken)."

Compared to Estrada who had been mayor, senator and vice president before he ended up in Malacañang, Poe has has no experience whatsover in governance.

But Pimentel said the actor knew his political weaknesses, so he was pulling all stops to make himself exposed to all the facets of the presidency.

Pimentel also reiterated that Poe was wary of being surrounded by politicians "with whom he is not familiar and who may have self-serving or sinister agenda."

Pimentel said that during his one-on-one meeting with Poe, he made it clear to the actor that he was not asking for anything for himself.

In return, Poe told Pimentel that he was willing to consider adopting the latter's platform of government, dubbed "Freedom," which stands for federalism, reforms, economic, education, debt, overseas Filipino workers and Mindanao.

"However, it is understood that Freedom that does limit Poe's program of action that his group may craft for the good of the people. Poe has a pool of advisers helping him draw up a comprehensive platform of government."

Erap gives up on Ping-FPJ rift

By Armand Nocum
and Martin Marfil

FORGET it.

Fed up with "intrigues" within the "united" opposition, ousted President Estrada has dropped his personal efforts to resolve differences between Sen. Panfilo Lacson and actor Fernando Poe Jr. who are both bent on running for president next year.

"They are intelligent persons. They can settle this between them," Estrada said barely a week after he announced that he and other opposition leaders were working out a "formula" to make sure they would have only one candidate.

He admitted that he failed to get the two together.

"They should meet on their own initiative," the former president told the INQUIRER in a phone interview from Camp Capinpin in Tanay Rizal. Reminded that, as titular head of the opposition, only he might be able to prevent an impending and damaging split, he said: "I will mediate only if they ask for my help."

Estrada did not give the exact reason for his turnabout, but hinted that leaders of the two camps were muddling unification efforts. "It's hard to rely on leaders," he said. "They just love to sow intrigues."

Lacson and Fernando Poe Jr. are reportedly set to file their certificates of candidacy as "independents" on Dec. 29, since a Commission on Elections hearing meant to settle disputes between the warring camps will not be held until the next day.

In a phone interview, Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos said. Once the problems are straightened out possibly "within a week," he said, the two could run under the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino banner.

Lacson earlier accused LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara, and Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto of pushing Poe's bid without a proper selection process.

Angara filed a manifestation before the Comelec saying that, as party president, he alone had the authority to nominate its presidential candidate.

Yesterday, Abalos said Angara's manifestation was converted into a petition so that the poll body could assume jurisdiction over the matter.

Abalos said he has ordered Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, LDP secretary general—whose faction is backing Lacson—to comment on the petition.

Sen. Loren Legarda, rumored to be Poe's potential running mate, said the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino that supports the actor might convince him to file his candidacy on the last day, Jan. 5.

The battle to get the LDP nomination is hinged on the need for a party machinery for the standard-bearer.

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SPEAKERSHIP IN '04

Joe de V has GMA backing

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

DE VENECIA

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday gave Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. a birthday gift he could not refuse—her endorsement of his re-election bid both as representative of Pangasinan and Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2004.

The President personally delivered the gift to De Venecia by attending the Speaker's traditional celebration of his birthday in his turf in Bonoan, Binloc.

The President inaugurated the Fernando Avenue Fish Market in Dagupan and the National Bangus Production Center in Bonoan, Binloc, both funded from De Venecia's pork barrel.

To endorse De Venecia's re-election bid, the President had to exact a "sacrifice" from Dagupan City Mayor Benjie Lim who was eyeing De Venecia's seat in the fourth district of Pangasinan.

Lim was actually a congressman of the district when De Venecia had to sit out three years following his unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1998. He made the "sacrifice" by running for Dagupan mayor when De Venecia decided to reclaim the seat in 2001.

"There is equity of the incumbent for (De Venecia) but because we all realize that we may be able to have Speaker Jose de Venecia as speaker of the House of Representatives again, Benjie agreed to run for city mayor so that Dagupan can have a candidate for Speaker and the sacrifice of Benjie is more worth it," the President said in a speech at the inauguration of the *bangus* center.

She said it would be a "good birthday gift to my partner in progress in changing our landscape in the Philippines."

The President's endorsement was delivered amid reports that De Venecia would be challenged by young congressmen when the new Congress opens in 2004. De Venecia is architect of the "rainbow" and "sunshine" coalitions in the House, which enabled him several times to get elected Speaker and support the legislative agenda of the administration.

Ms Macapagal noted that she and De Venecia had been partners since 1998, when the latter lost the presidential election and she won as his running mate.

"And in the House of Representatives, we became partners again. Once again, Joe has delivered the legislation that we need for many changes that we have to do," she said.

Ms Macapagal, who also attended De Venecia's advanced birthday dinner in his house in Dasmariñas Village in Makati on Christmas Day, hailed De Venecia's role in defusing the constitutional crisis spawned by the impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.

"Despite some criticisms against him in the past, Joe de Venecia was recognized as a hero of our constitutional democracy. Joe and I are really partners," she said.

Ms Macapagal is chair of the ruling Lakas-CMD while De Venecia is president.

Former Dagupan mayor tapped for BI

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday announced her impending appointment of former Dagupan City Mayor Alipio Fernandez as new head commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation.

She said she would appoint Fernandez a few weeks from now.

Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo said she was going to run for governor of Pampanga and is expected to resign soon.

The President made the announcement in Dagupan City, where she inaugurated a *bangus* (milkfish) center and attended the celebration of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.'s birthday yesterday.

She mentioned the appointment after acknowledging Dagupan City Vice Mayor Aldrin Fernandez, son of the incoming BI commissioner.

A number of Cabinet officials and other executives are set to run for different positions in the 2004 national elections.

Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong is set to file his certificate of candidacy on Dec. 29 and there is still no replacement, according to presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

He said that until then, there would be no vacancy in the Department of Justice.

"And when it becomes vacant, then the President will just make the proper announcement. But as of now, she has not mentioned any replacement and the instruction to us is to just wait for the announcement," Bunye said.

Trade and Industry Secretary Mar Roxas had resigned earlier to seek a Senate seat. The President appointed businessman Cesar Purisima to Roxas' post.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, December 27, 2003
John, Apostle & Evangelist

1st Reading: 1 Jn 1:1-4
Gospel: Jn 20:2-8

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. And she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him."

Peter then set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying flat, but he did not enter.

Then Simon Peter came following him and entered the tomb; he, too, saw the linen cloths lying flat. The napkin, which had been around his head was not lying flat like the other linen cloths but lay rolled up in its place. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and believed.

Commentary

Although some scripture scholars and theologians have offered alternative identifications, the Tradition has constantly identified the "beloved disciple" of today's gospel with John, son of Zebedee, brother of James, apostle and evangelist. Today, he runs with Peter to the empty tomb but he runs more swiftly and gets there first. This out-running of Peter seems to be a pattern. In the last chapter of John, Peter and the beloved disciple along with some others have fished the night away and caught nothing. At dawn, a stranger appears on the shore, telling them to cast their nets again. Again, it is John, not Peter, whose heart runs more swiftly and recognizes that "It is the Lord!" Perhaps we are being reminded that it is not primarily the Church of hierarchy and position, represented by Peter, that recognizes the Lord most quickly, but the Church of love, represented by John.

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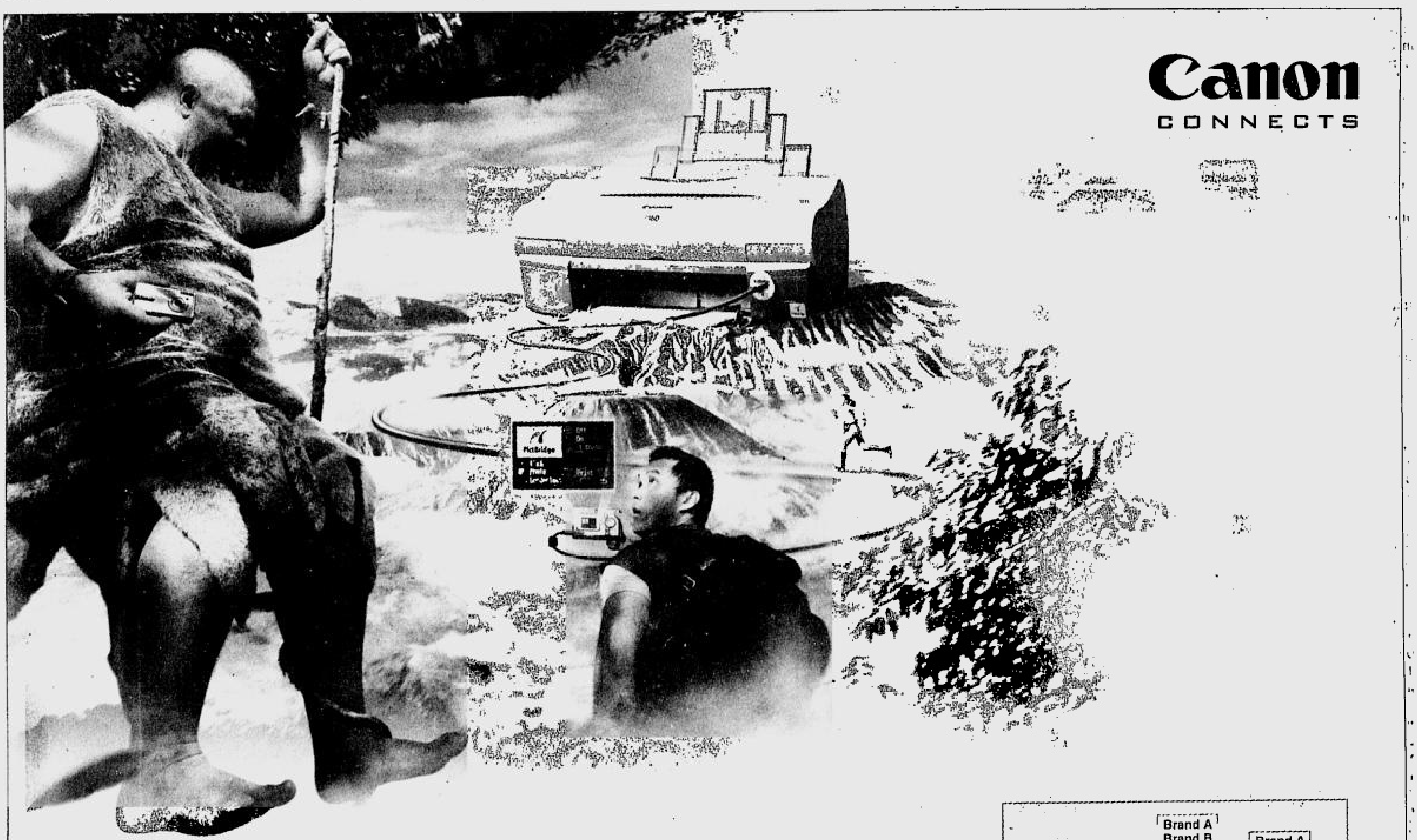
SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CRIMINAL LAW (CRIMES AGAINST CHASTITY)—Statutory rape—Republic Act No. 8385, otherwise also known as the Anti-Rape Act of 1997, has incorporated a new chapter in the Revised Penal Code. In a new provision, designated Article 266-A, the crime of rape is committed either by sexual intercourse or by sexual assault. Rape by sexual intercourse, pursuant to the first paragraph of the article, is committed by a man who shall have carnal knowledge of a woman under any of the following circumstances; viz: (a) Through force, threat, or intimidation; (b) When the offended party is deprived of reason or otherwise unconscious; (c) By means of fraudulent machination or grave abuse of authority; and (d) When the offended party is under twelve (12) years of age or is demented, even though none of the circumstances mentioned above be present. The last of the enumeration, item (d) above, constitutes what is so often referred to as statutory rape. Rape by sexual assault, mentioned in the second paragraph of the same article, is committed by any person who, under any of the aforestated circumstances, inserts his penis into another person's mouth or anal orifice, or any instrument or object into the genital or anal orifice of another person. [Citations omitted.] [En Banc, Justice Vitug, People vs Olaybar, G. R. No. 150630-31, October 1, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA



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Reds poised to launch more attacks despite peace efforts

COMMUNIST guerrillas called yesterday for intensified attacks against the government and claimed to have boosted their ranks despite peace overtures by the authorities.

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) central committee chairman Armando Liwanag called on guerrillas to further "expand and intensify" tactical attacks and "isolate and bring down" the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The party would "extend the guerrilla fronts to the majority of municipalities, especially those in the strategic parts of the archipelago," Liwanag said in a statement marking the CPP's 35th anniversary.

Its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), "is waging extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare on the basis of an ever widening and ever deepening mass base," Liwanag said.

Authorities believe Liwanag is a nom de guerre of Jose Maria Sison, the self-exiled communist leader based in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

The military has said the NPA numbers around 9,000.

Ms Macapagal, however, said talks with the rebels were on track even as authorities have been asked to "maintain vigilance against any terrorist acts."

Tough on terror

"It is important to win peace agreements and to reconcile past political conflicts while we are being tough against terrorism and corruption," she said in a statement.

At light railway stations and at the South Harbor passenger terminal, police with bomb sniffing dogs checked for explosive devices.

Police armed with long firearms have also set up road blocks to check vehicles.

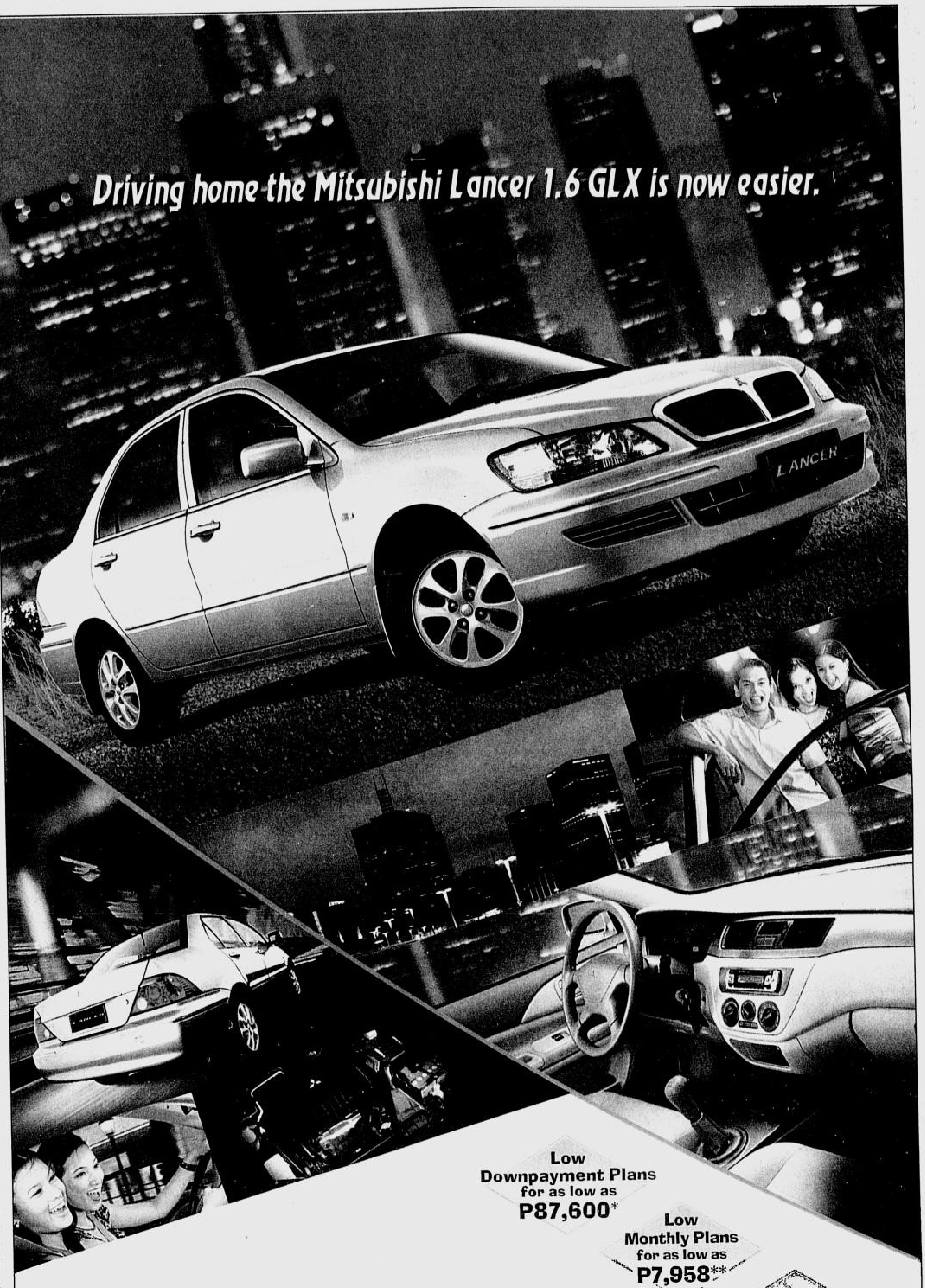
The chairman of the House committee on national defense, Rep. Prospero Pichay, reiterated yesterday his proposal to extend the ceasefire between the government and communist rebels until after the May 2004 elections.

In a statement, Pichay said the ceasfire extension with the communist and Moro rebels had gained support from other congressmen, who agreed that the extension would enhance the credibility and orderly conduct of forthcoming elections.

He said it would be in the best interest of of the NPA to support the holding of a peaceful and orderly elections, considering that numerous party-list representatives allied with the Left are expected to seek election.

Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano urged Spoeaker Jose de venecia and other House leaders to support the peace initiative, which he said would help the next administration start with a clean slate.

Rep. Augusto Syjuco (Iloilo) also sought the support of Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and socialist organizations to back the proposal. *AFP*



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Explosives ...

From page A1

Maj. Gen. Trifonio Salazar, commander of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, said Escobido was trying to defuse the bomb at 1:05 p.m. when it exploded. The expert died on the spot from injuries and burns.

Yapching said the explosion created a big crater. "It [bomb] was enough to blast a tank or a big vehicle," he said.

Salazar said the other bomb, which was recovered by PAF personnel near the runway, had been defused.

Salapuddin said "urban terrorists," possibly with links to Abu Sayyaf leader Galib Andang, alias commander Robot, were behind the planting of the explosives.

Andang, who figured in various kidnapping cases, including the Sipadan hostage crisis, was captured in Indanan, Sulu on Dec. 7.

Shortly after his arrest, military and police officials said they were bracing for retaliatory attack from Andang's men.

BANGUS CENTER
President Macapagal, accompanied by Speaker Jose de Venecia and Agriculture Secretary Cito Lorenzo, leads the symbolic stocking of "bangus" fingerlings during the inauguration of the Philippine Bangus Center in Dagupan City.
VAL HANDUMON

Storm 'Zigzag' brings new landslide threat

From page A1

Dr. Prisco Nilo, head of Pagasa's weather branch, said the threat was focused on northern Samar and Bicol and he urged local officials in these areas to take precautionary measures.

Pagasa issued warnings of possible flash floods and deadly landslides after an active low pressure area off Catanduanes intensified into a tropical depression.

Weather bulletins did not contain such warnings during torrential rains triggered by seasonal northeasterly winds in Visayas and Mindanao on Dec. 16-19 that left about 200 dead or missing and entire villages buried under mud.

On Friday, Eastern Visayas and Bicol began to experience winds strong enough to uproot small trees, while sea travel for small fishing boats became risky, according to local officials.

About 400 passengers heading for areas in Eastern Visayas and Bicol have been stranded at various ports in Albay and Sorsogon.

In a separate disaster, three more survivors from a ferry that sank with 75 people aboard off Palawan on Sunday have been found on the Malaysian island of Bangui, bringing the total number of those rescued to 27, Philippine navy spokesperson Geronimo Malabanan said.

He said authorities were also checking reports that 29 other people may have been rescued. *Reports from Ronnie Lorejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio in Manila*

Victims of CPP purge narrate tales of torture

From page A1

in the forests of Quezon and Laguna. (In Metro Manila, suspects were made to wear blue T-shirts to mark them as prisoners of the Manila-Rizal regional committee.)

Those who survived a camp were moved to another camp and then to another and yet another to avoid detection by the military.

There were no cages at an NPA camp at the foot of Mt. Apo in 1985. Hounded by the military, the guerrillas and the committee conducting the investigation moved from one camp to the next, usually a group of houses abandoned by their owners because of military operations, according to a former member of the committee.

The prisoners were tied to trees or to house posts.

To humiliate the prisoners, they were given names associated with beasts. A cadre said he was called "Bornok," the name of a monster in a comics series.

Another cadre said pictures of some of the captives were taken, with the threat that these would be made public.

Humiliation

Female prisoners were humiliated at a camp in Quezon through the "flag ceremony" treatment: They were hung by their wrists for days, with their toes barely touching the ground.

A woman on the kitchen staff of Task Force OPML was given such a treatment. She was arrested on the charge that she had planned to poison members of the task force by lacing the food with mothballs.

"I hung there for two days, and my jogging pants were pulled down, exposing my panties," she said. "I was not given food."

Other forms of physical torture included slapping, kicking, beating and hitting of the shin with a stick.

Also used in inflicting pain were *hantik*, large reddish ants with a fierce bite.

While Tatang, a 62-year-old supporter of the movement, was hanging by his wrists from a cage, ants were spilled on his body, according to a survivor whose cage was beside the old man's.

The leaves of the plant "*alingatong*" (*Dendrocnide meyeniana*) were also rubbed on the abdomen of suspected military spies in northwestern Mindanao, causing itchiness, according to the relatives of some of the survivors.

In such cases, abrasions develop on the skin the more one scratches.

Food

A potent weapon used against the prisoners was food.

"One of the worst punishments we endured was the denial of food," Robert Francis Garcia, a survivor of the OPML, said at a forum.

He added: "We were fed just enough to keep us alive: no more than a teaspoonful of rice at mealtime, sometimes none at all. The rain was partly a blessing, as we could drink from pools of collected water. All of us turned skin and bones in a matter of time. During idle moments, we dreamt of food, getting delirious with the mere thought of eating. We spared not a single grain of rice. Some begged the guards for their leftover fish tails and bones."

Psychological torture was likewise employed. One took the form of the children's ditty "Penpen de Sarapen," which the Task Force OPML used in singling out a prisoner to be killed. Unknown to the prisoners, the one chosen had been earlier sentenced to die.

A technique adopted from the military was letting a prisoner stand before a freshly dug pit, which would be made known to him as his final resting place.

A member of a party group in Metro Manila dedicated to supporting the guerrilla war in the Visayas was made to stand before such a pit in an NPA camp, preparatory to his being shot in the head. At the last minute, his execution was called off.

Before that, he was hung upside down and later injected with truth serum. To this day, he said, "I shake when I recall the torture."

Not only drugs but also alcohol was forced on some prisoners.

Kristo Enriquez, then head of a party district in Manila and now believed dead, was forced to drink gin to make him talk even when he was fasting to protest his arrest, according to his sister who had spoken with his captor.

Serial number

One method common to the OPML and Kahos was to ask a prisoner to reveal his supposed rank in the military. But interrogators in Southern Tagalog and the Visayas went beyond that: They demanded the captive's serial number.

"After retelling my life story, I was asked about my serial number as a military agent. But I don't even know my ROTC serial number!" said OPML survivor Manuel "Steve" Quiambao. ("ROTC" stands for the Reserve Officers' Training Course for college students.)

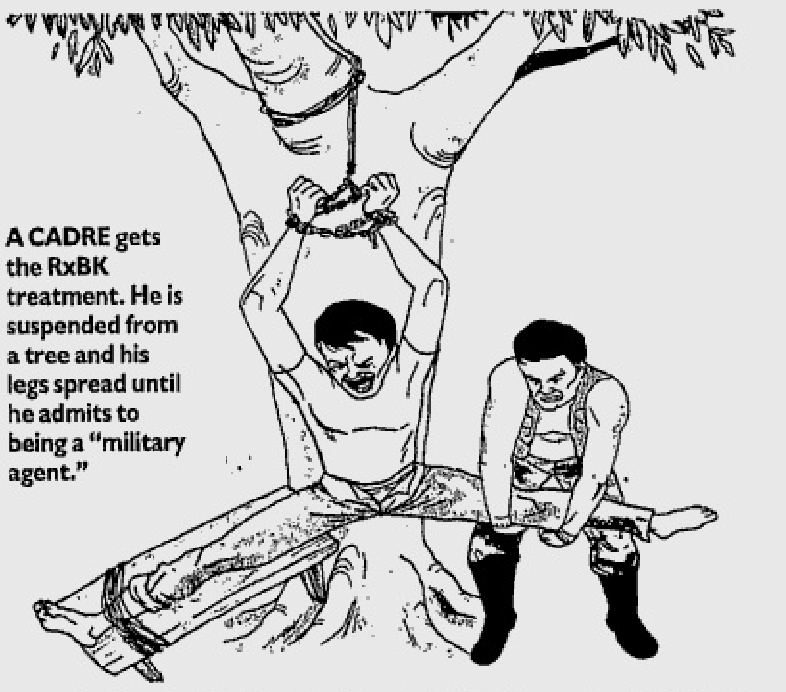
"I was also asked how much salary I was drawing from the military, how I became an agent, who recruited me and what my rank was," Quiambao said.

Not being a military spy, a prisoner in an NPA camp gave his college ID number to his interrogator.

This was how a former member of an investigating committee in Mindanao described the process of extracting information from a captive: "It's question and answer. The suspect, whose hands and feet are bound, is tied to a tree. Sometimes he is made to sit. We beat him with a stick while we are asking him questions. If he is wearing pants, these will burst because the legs become so swollen."

OPML interrogators used a modified form of the question-and-answer method.

Quiambao recounted his experience: "While someone was beating my feet, legs and thighs with a piece of rattan for hours, I was tied to a tree. Then my accuser was presented to me. He told me to admit that I am an agent, and I said the accusation was untrue. When my accuser was told to leave, my torturers applied the RxBK [Rx Bukaka, or split] method. While I was hanging from a tree by my chained hands, they spread my legs and someone hit my feet with *yantok*. I could not bear the pain. After 15 minutes I collapsed.



A CADRE gets the RxBK treatment. He is suspended from a tree and his legs spread until he admits to being a "military agent."

"[The then head of the Southern Luzon Commission] let me inhale ammonia. Because I could not bear the pain, I 'confessed' and made up a story."

Innocence

As in Ahos, the testimony of "confessed" spies was jotted down in the OPML.

Those found guilty of spying for the military were stabbed just below the armpit or in the shoulder near the base of the neck so they would die quickly.

"It was like butchering a pig or a cow," said a witness to an execution.

Guns were rarely used in executions so as not to betray the location of the camp.

Before the condemned was executed in Southern Mindanao, he or she was told: "You are sentenced to death for the crime of spying." Then the executioner would ask whether the condemned wanted to be blindfolded.

It was not uncommon for the condemned to declare their innocence until the end. "Comrades, *maglagom kayo* (learn from the past). I am from [name of place]. I am not a DPA," a guerrilla said before a hunting knife pierced his chest.

In the forests of the Sierra Madre in Southern Tagalog, Darmo made a similar declaration as he was about to die: "*Wala akong kasalanan, mga kasama* (I am innocent, my comrades)!"

Darmo was later found innocent, and the CPP hailed him and other victims of the anti-infiltration campaigns as "martyrs of the revolution." *Tomorrow: Why it happened*

'Please tell them that I'm innocent'

From page A1

table with a *gasera* (gas lamp). Suddenly, somebody shouted, "Heads down on the table!" and rifles were pointed at us. Three of us were blindfolded and chained and ordered not to talk.

Later, we were made to walk in single file for 10 minutes. When our blindfolds were removed, we saw that we were standing before wooden cages that were to serve as our cells.

We were given new names. Mine was Marco.

The next morning, I noted that there were about 10 cells with prisoners, about 10 meters apart, covered with plastic sheets. I heard the voices of a woman and a man in the cells to my right. The youth organizers whom our group had met in Sta. Cruz on the way to the camp were in the cells to my left.

After a week, I was presented to Dex, Gerry and Igor, and told to sit at the table.

"Starting today, we are dropping you from the rolls of the party because you're a DPA (deep-penetration agent)," Dex said.

"That's not true," I protested. "Only the Central Committee can drop me from the rolls."

I was told that Protocol II of the Geneva Convention did not cover treason and espionage.

"Someone has already squealed on you," Gerry said.

"That's not true. What's your basis?" I said.

Igor cut in: "You son of a bitch, you set up Ka Lusing in Calamba. You did not show up at the meeting. They were almost arrested."

"You're mistaken," I said, and broke into tears.

'Confess'

Three days passed before I was interrogated again, this time by Dex, Igor, Diane and Lea.

"Are you going to confess now?" Dex said.

"What will I confess?" I said. I could still smile then.

They presented someone, a youth organizer from Biñan, who had supposedly identified me as a spy. He was sobbing. Then he was led away.

"You son of a bitch. So you're a nut hard to crack!" Dex said.

A yellow pad was rolled and used to hit my face. Vlady pointed an M-16 at me and pulled the trigger. The rifle had no bullet.

I was then made to sit before a pit three feet deep.

"Are you going to confess now?" they asked, a gun pointed at me.

"What will I confess?" I said.

They put bullets between my fingers and squeezed. Someone shoved a fist against my chest bone.

I cried in pain. I was also made to squat, and my shin was hit with something hard.

After that day, I was interrogated daily. I was roused from sleep at night. I was slapped repeatedly.

The routine lasted a month. Two women took notes of my interrogation.

On those nights, I could hear someone's cries and the whirring of a power saw. Sometimes, they deprived me of food. There were moments when I entertained the thought of committing suicide by slashing my wrists with the sharp edge of a tin can, but I couldn't find any.

Blood

Sometime in August, while I was playing chess with a guard who was just outside my cell, Dex flashed a fan-knife at me. His hands were smeared with blood.

"Do you want this to happen to you?" he said. I knew his hands were smeared with pig's blood.

They thought I was recruited by a son of Tatang, a 62-year-old businessman who supported the movement. Tatang was suspected of having a hand in the disappearance of members of the regional committee in Calamba in 1977.

The anti-DPA campaign was called Operation Missing Link because no one knew how they disappeared.

I decided to make up a story after an incident in the second week of August.

One day, at about 2 p.m., I and four others were let out of our cells, linked with a nylon cord, and ordered to form a line.

"Right face! March!" Dex ordered.

I thought we would be set free. After walking for 50 meters, I saw a 4-foot-deep hole in the ground big enough to hold a person.

"So no one will talk among you? No one?" Dex said. "All right, kill them!"

They played *Penpen di Sarapen*, some sort of Eeny-Meeny-Miney-Mo, to arrive at who should be killed: "*Penpen di sarapen, si-no sa in-yo ang pa-pa-ta-yin? Eto o eto . . . eto!*"

Darmo was pinpointed and brought before the pit.

"Watch how we will kill him! Darmo, do you have anything to say to your family?" Dex said.

"Please tell them that I'm innocent!" Darmo said, trembling. He was blindfolded and made to kneel, then Ranny struck his nape with a piece of wood three feet long.

Darmo fell into the hole but was able to stand up. Ranny bludgeoned him again.

He stood up and shouted, "*Wala akong kasalanan, mga kasama* (I'm innocent, my comrades)!"

His head cracked the third time he was hit. As a *coup de grace*, he was stabbed at the base of his neck.

Yes

Someone asked me: "Will you be the next? What's your message to your family?" That's when I said yes.

Yes, I was recruited by Tatang's son. Yes, I'm a DPA.

They asked about my salary, my network, how I was recruited. I found it difficult to make up something. I merely confirmed what they had told me.

I thought that what I was doing was not right, but it was a matter of survival. I told them about Red Sox ("Oplan Red Shank"), a military plan to infiltrate the party, which I had earlier read about in a torn page of the INQUIRER that I found at the camp.

Two days later, Igor and Lea made me list down the supposed military spies I knew. They took a picture of me holding a plate with my name on it.

Then the series of killings began. Many more were arrested.

2nd camp

In the last week of August we moved to the area where four Army lieutenants had been held by the NPA, and stayed there for a night. The next morning, I and six other prisoners and 21 of our captors hiked for a day and a night.

The second camp was in Sitio Piapi, Barangay Cagsiay Dos, in Mauban, Quezon. I could see a creek from there.

The prisoners stayed together in a hut with no walls. It had a floor made of slabs of wood. After several days nine other prisoners from Quezon arrived.

I received severe torture at the second camp. With my hands bound, I was made to sit by a big tree. They raised my feet as if I were being made to do a split. Igor pulled at one of my legs and a woman pounded my knee with a coconut shell.

"Confess some more!" said Igor, Ken and Dex.

Then, before all the people in the camp, Dex took off my underwear. Using a razor, he slit the skin just above my penis four times.

The torture lasted for half a day.

"Just kill me because I just made up the story. You won't get anything from me. Call Ken and tell him to kill me," I screamed.

Days later, they asked me about some names in Manila. If they were unsatisfied with my answer, Igor would force me to eat a piece of paper.

We stayed at the camp for two weeks. The prisoners ate together. Sometimes we had fish.

At night I could hear screams. I saw people being marched off, with someone carrying a spade and a crowbar.

Liberty

At the end of September, we marched for two days before reaching the third camp in Sitio Pulot, San Antonio in Kalayaan, Laguna. Here, Ken kicked me in the face.

In October, we hiked for eight hours to the fourth camp in Kabana-banaan in Mauban, Quezon. I was no longer tortured but others were. We were not given food.

We moved to the fifth camp, also in Mauban, in November. There was little tension by then because the Executive Committee of the CPP Central Committee had begun reviewing our cases.

On Nov. 16 or 17, a member of the Executive Committee and the late Armando Teng spoke with me. They asked me to tell my life story, how I started in the movement.

The second time I met them, I retracted what I had told my torturers.

I was set free on Dec. 8. The then head of the Southern Luzon Commission summoned me and said: "I can no longer shed tears to ask for your forgiveness. Come, let's go to our comrades."

Unchained, I went to a group that included those who had also been released, as well as some members of the Central Committee. They sang a song welcoming me back to the party.

I cried. *As told to Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.*

Betti was shot by accident, says kidnap suspect

By Christian V. Esguerra

BETTI Chua Sy was killed by accident.

Elinzeo Saliente, the top Sy kidnap-slay suspect arrested on Christmas Eve, has confessed to shooting the victim during her abduction but maintained he did not mean to kill her, according to a senior police official.

Chief Supt. Dionisio Coloma, Region 8 police director, told the INQUIRER yesterday: "(Saliente) claimed he accidentally pulled the trigger (and that) killing her was not part of the plan."

During the overnight interrogation right after Saliente's arrest at a checkpoint in San Juanico Bridge in Leyte, Coloma said the suspect insisted that his gang was simply "out for the money."

Saliente and his girlfriend Tricia Rodriguez, who was with him when he was nabbed, were brought the next day to the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

His supposed admission boosted probers' initial theory. The kidnappers did not intend to kill the Coca-Cola executive when they blocked her Toyota Rav 4 in Quezon City last Nov. 17, police said earlier. The abductors had fired at the vehicle only to force Sy to alight, they said, but she was hit on the leg and very likely bled to death.

Going by this "mishandling," Coloma concluded that the gang members were "neophytes ... definitely not the most experienced."

Director Avelino Razon, police director for operations, confirmed Saliente had admitted killing Chua. However, he said he expected the suspect to recant the statement. "But even if he does," he told reporters, "we will go by the evidence."

Senior Supt. Ronald Estilles, whose men at the Parañaque police conducted the initial investigation on the case, said Saliente was not in the list provided by Romeo Dacallos, the gang member who earlier surrendered and admitted driving the dying Chua to the group's hideout in Cavite.

Quoting Dacallos, Estilles said the "unit" assigned to snatch Sy was led by a certain JR, who remains at large.

Saliente was initially charged with illegal possession of firearms, since he had yielded a 38-caliber revolver with six bullets during his arrest.

Razon said the Naktf has since gotten "very positive" reactions from the Filipino-Chinese community, whose members, he said, have been giving authorities "financial and logistical" support. He did not elaborate.

President Macapagal-Arroyo commended the agencies involved in Saliente's arrest, including the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response. She also attributed the success of the operation to police checkpoints set up after Sy's killing.

"This demonstrates the effectiveness of our interdiction measures," the President said in a statement, in which she vowed to "bring justice to kidnap victims." *With Juliet L. Javellana*

Clearance of Palace lawyer defended

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman has defended before the Supreme Court the exclusion of former Presidential Legal Adviser Avelino Cruz Jr. and officials of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) from among those charged with graft for the alleged overpricing of the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, a 5.1-km asphalt road in the Manila Bay reclamation area.

In an eight-page consolidated comment, Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor C. Fernandez denied that the Ombudsman favored Cruz and the GSIS Board of Trustees and officers when they were excluded from the charge sheet.

The Ombudsman filed graft charges against 26 government officials before the Sandiganbayan in July for the overpriced boulevard that cost the government P532,926,420.39 "at the very least."

Cruz, who was acting Executive Secretary at the time, was linked to the scam for issuing a memo to the GSIS and PEA that informed them about President Macapagal-Arroyo's approval of the P1 billion loan agreement between the two agencies for the road project.

But in its resolution, the Ombudsman cleared Cruz of any liability, saying that he was not the one who approved the loan agreement.

"The memorandum he issued is very clear and need not be interpreted. He merely informed the parties to the loan agreement that it has been approved by the President, which is ministerial on the part of the Executive Secretary," the resolution said.

The Ombudsman also cleared the GSIS officials because they had "nothing to do with the bidding, award, implementation and payment" of the project.

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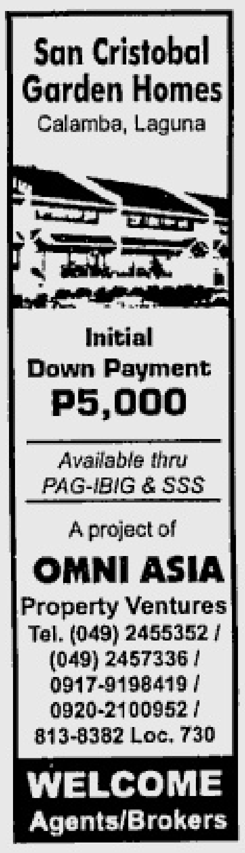
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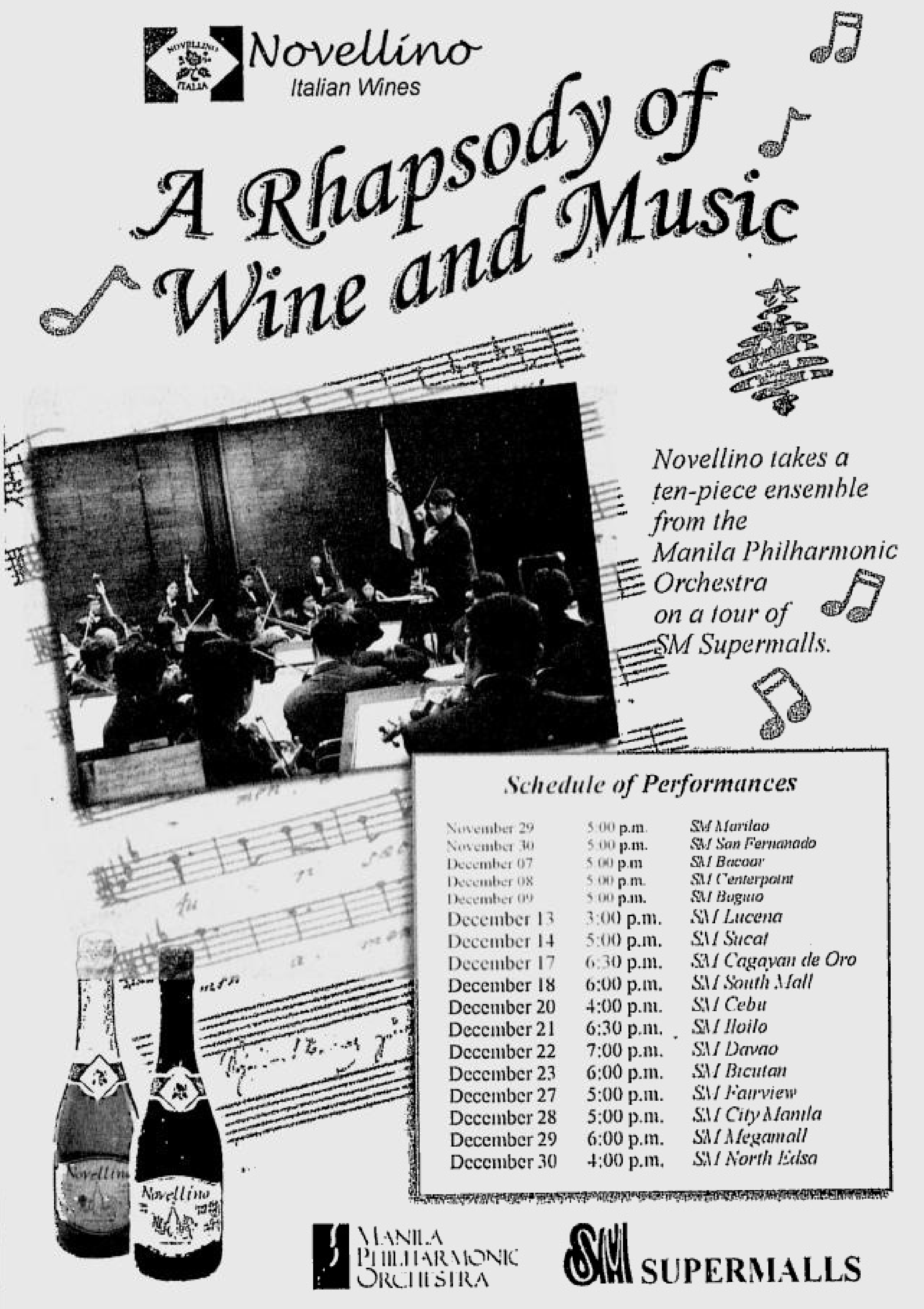
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December 13	3:00 p.m.	SM Lucena
December 14	5:00 p.m.	SM Sucat
December 17	6:30 p.m.	SM Cagayan de Oro
December 18	6:00 p.m.	SM South Mall
December 20	4:00 p.m.	SM Cebu
December 21	6:30 p.m.	SM Iloilo
December 22	7:00 p.m.	SM Davao
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Iran earthquake kills thousands

From page A1

ing hospitals were full. The wounded were reportedly being ferried to neighboring towns.

Iran's Red Crescent, the Islamic equivalent of the Red Cross, said rescue and relief teams had been sent to Bam from numerous provinces, including Tehran.

"We are doing everything we can to rescue the injured and unearth the dead," the television quoted Karimi as saying.

Relief teams set up their headquarters in a public square in Bam because their offices in the governor's building had been ruined, Karimi told state radio.

Citadel ruined

The citadel of Bam was destroyed, television reported. The oldest part of the fortress dates to about 2,000 years ago, but most was built in the 15th to 18th centuries. It attracts thousands of tourists a year.

"The historic quarter of the city has been completely destroyed and caused great human loss," said Mehran Nourbakhsh, chief spokesperson for the Red Crescent.

"Authorities have demanded immediate blood donations to save the lives of those who have been admitted to hospital in the provincial capital of Kerman," the television newscaster said.

She added telephone links with Bam have been severed. Authorities were in contact with the Bam area through radio and satellite phone links. The official Islamic Republic News Agency (Irna) quoted the Red Crescent's Nourbakhsh as saying water and electricity links to Bam had also been cut.

The quake had several aftershocks, one of magnitude 5.3, Irna quoted the geophysics institute of Tehran University as saying.

In Iran, quakes of more than magnitude 5 usually kill people.

In Washington, the US Geological Survey reported the quake had a preliminary magnitude of 6.7, which is enough to cause severe damage.

In a second earthquake, a temblor of Magnitude 4 rocked the west Iranian town of Masjid Soleiman at 8:10 a.m. (0440 GMT) Friday, but no casualties were immediately reported, state television said. Masjid Soleiman is about 480 km southwest of Tehran and about 950 km northwest of Bam.

A leading Iranian earthquake expert told Reuters in October that earthquake education in Iran was very poor.

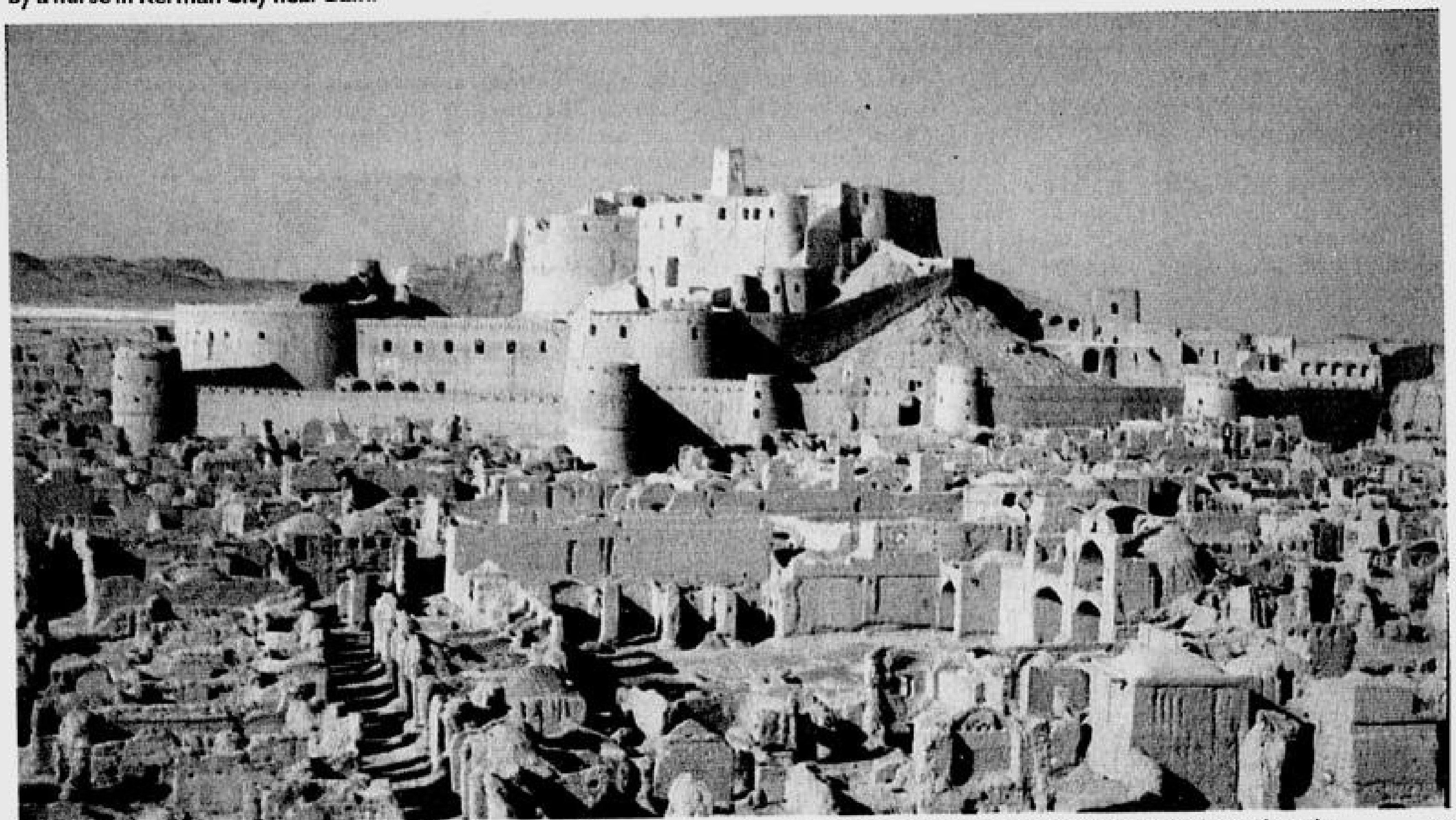
"Most people think what God wills, will happen. This is absolutely wrong. This thinking is poisonous," said Bahram Akasheh, professor of geophysics at Tehran University. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

Major quakes since 1923

- May 1, 2003; southeastern Turkey, magnitude 6.4; 167 people killed, including 83 children in a collapsed dormitory.
- Feb. 24, 2003; western China, magnitude 6.3 or 6.8, at least 266 killed.
- June 22, 2002; northwestern Iran, magnitude 6; at least 500 killed.
- March 25, 2002; northern Afghanistan, magnitude 5.8, up to 1,000 killed.
- Jan. 26, 2001; India; magnitude 7.9; at least 2,500 killed. Estimates put death toll as high as 13,000.
- Sept. 21, 1999; Taiwan; magnitude 7.6; 2,400 killed.
- Aug. 17, 1999; western Turkey; magnitude 7.4; 17,000 killed.
- Jan. 25, 1999; western Colombia; magnitude 6; 1,171 killed.
- May 30, 1998; northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, magnitude 6.9, As many as 5,000 killed.
- May 10, 1997; northern Iran; magnitude 7.1; 1,500 killed.
- Jan. 17, 1995; Kobe, Japan; magnitude 7.2; more than 6,000 killed.
- Sept. 30, 1993: Latur, India; magnitude 6,0; as many as 10,000 killed.
- June 21, 1990; northwest Iran; magnitude 7.3 to 7.7; 50,000 killed.
- Dec. 7, 1988; northwest Armenia; magnitude 6.9; 25,000 killed.
- Sept. 19, 1985; central Mexico; magnitude 8.1; more than 9,500 killed.
- Sept. 16, 1978; northeast Iran; magnitude 7.7; 25,000 killed.
- July 28, 1976; Tangshan, China; magnitude 7.8 to 8.2; 240,000 killed.
- Feb. 4, 1976; Guatemala; magnitude 7.5; 22,778 killed.
- Dec. 26, 1939; Erzincan province, Turkey; magnitude 7.9; 33,000 killed.
- Jan. 24, 1939; Chillan, Chile; magnitude 8.3; 28,000 killed.
- May 31, 1935; Quetta, India; magnitude 7.5; 50,000 killed.
- Sept. 1, 1923; Tokyo-Yokohama, Japan; magnitude 8.3; at least 140,000 killed.

AP

IMAGES from Iranian television show a young earthquake victim being wheeled into a hospital and a woman on a stretcher being attended to by a nurse in Kerman City near Bam. AP



PICTURE taken in 1975 shows the citadel of Bam, one of the wonders of Iran's heritage, which was damaged in Friday's earthquake. AFP

With or without me...

From page A1

who was allowed by the Sandiganbayan to travel to the United States for medical treatment in the first week of January.

Estrada said yesterday in a phone interview that Poe might even get more votes than he did. Estrada won by a big margin in the 1998 presidential election.

Estrada, who is detained on graft and plunder charges, belied allegations that Malacañang influenced the Sandiganbayan into allowing him to go abroad so President Macapagal-Arroyo could woo voters loyal to him. Ms Macapagal is running in the May presidential election.

The deposed president said it would be unfair to accuse both Ms Macapagal and the Sandiganbayan of playing politics.

"She [Ms Macapagal] has nothing to do with it. The Sandiganbayan justices made the decision based on the merits of the case," Estrada said. "There is nothing political here since I am going to return before the elections."

Had the justices played politics, they could have ruled that he stay abroad until after the elections, instead of just giving him three months to stay in the US so that his arthritic knees could be operated on, Estrada said.

"I will return. Is there anything political there?" he asked.

Bahamas

Told about the warning of prosecutors that he would flee to the Bahamas where the Philippines has no extradition treaty, Estrada shot back: "They're crackpots. I was born here, I live here and I'll die here. Never did I dream of leaving our country or abandoning our people."

Besides, he said he could not bear leaving his mother Mary whose health is fast deteriorating. "She's always asking for me. I'm still figuring out a way to leave her ... anytime she can pass away," he said. "I'm worried that I may no longer find her here when I come back. She's 98 years old."

Estrada said his lawyers would ask the anti-graft court on Monday to extend the 10-day period given to him within which he was to make preparations for his three-month stay in the US.

He said 10 days was not enough for him to get a US visa and prepare his clothes because the Sandiganbayan ruled that he could not leave Camp Capinpin in Rizal before his trip.

"I need about a week more to sleep in our house, to be with my mother," he said. "I hope that I can spend time with her during the New Year celebrations."

One of Estrada;s court-appointed lawyers earlier said that defense lawyers would file a motion on Monday to ask the court to clarify the conditions it set for Estrada's trip to the US such as the need for the former president to pay for his four police escorts.

Buy time

But such move is exactly what government prosecutors need to buy time to be able to stop Estrada's departure for the US.

"We are happy because the Estrada camp is giving us arguments for the motion for reconsideration that we are going to file before the Sandiganbayan on Monday," Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said in a phone interview.

He also noted that Raymond Fortun, Estrada's lawyer, had said that Estrada had yet to recognize the authority of the anti-graft court. Fortun maintained that Estsrada remained the President and was beyond the authority of the Sandiganbayan.

Villa-Ignacio said the statements that Fortun made on television after the Sandiganbayan issued its controversial resolution Tuesday violated the court's second condition—that the Estrada issue a "personal undertaking" promising to return to the country and stating that "he is recognizing the authority of the court over his person and over the cases filed against him."

"On two counts, the condition cannot be implemented. That will be our argument," said Villa-Ignacio, who earlier admitted that time may not be on the prosecutors' side because the Sandiganbayan issued its ruling during the Christmas break.

Villa-Ignacio said the prosecutors would ask the Supreme Court to stop the implementation of the Sandiganbayan order.

He said the prosecutors would also ask the anti-graft court to suspend the implementation of its resolution.

GMA steps into controversy...

From page A1

the mayor.

He accused Lerias of orchestrating black propaganda against him because of the coming elections. He said it was the governor who took advantage of the tragedy when she distributed the relief goods through her allies in San Francisco.

Earlier, Amarga, who is coordinating with Resus in the distribution of the relief goods coming from nongovernmental organizations and private individuals, said that the Department of Social Welfare and Development released the goods from the municipal hall at the parish center because the evacuees were there. The center has been converted into an evacuation center.

But Saludo said Amarga and Resus distributed the relief items to the victims and told them that they came from Lerias. He even suggested that the parish priest should run in the next election.

The lawmaker also claimed that former Cebu City assessor Palermo Logo, who was being touted to run for mayor of San Francisco under Lerias' camp in next year's elections, also helped in the distribution although he was not a government official.

"If somebody was politicking, it was them," Saludo said in Cebuano.

He admitted that he gave packed items to the victims, which had stickers that bore his name. But he clarified that the items had long been prepared for the Christmas season.

"Of course, it is Christmas so we should place there with Merry Christmas. That explained why there was a sticker on the package. Why, should we just remove the stickers so we would not be accused of politicking?" he said.

Because the victims needed immediate assistance, Saludo said he instructed his daughter Marissa to lead in the distribution of the items in San Francisco.

He claimed that the governor did not even send heavy equipment to the town because its mayor was not her ally.

'First to respond'

Saludo claimed that he was the first official to respond to the tragedy even though he was in Manila last week. He said he arranged the release of the relief goods from other agencies and even communicated with his contacts abroad, including Japan, to get their assistance.

In the first two days, Saludo claimed he used his own money to purchase relief goods and to hire workers to clear the areas affected by the landslides.

But he said Lerias arrived in Liloan only on Sunday afternoon and even brought with her journalists to show that she was on the frontline.

Lerias and some members of the Southern Leyte Rescue Team were able to get into Liloan on Saturday afternoon after they cleared the areas of landslide.

She and her group initially took a pumpboat from Padre Burgos town, but was not able to sail to Liloan due to strong winds. It was then they decided to get to Liloan by land.

No reporter accompanied Lerias, it was learned.

"She was seen being interviewed on national television and by CNN," Saludo said.

He said it was all right that the governor was interviewed by different national and international media networks because it helped in informing the world that Southern Leyte needed help. But he said it was also unfair on his part to be accused of politicking.

The congressman dared Lerias to account for all the donations, as he feared that most of these items might not reach the landslide victims.

DSWD

Saludo said he had talked to Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and asked her to investigate a representative of the provincial social welfare office who allegedly connived with Lerias in distributing the goods under the parish priest and the vice mayor.

He said Soliman promised to impose sanction on the official.

Interviewed in Manila, Soliman yesterday said she did not mind if local politicians engaged in credit-grabbing during disaster relief operations so long as the donated goods promptly reach the victims.

But she asked town and provincial officials not to be "selective" in distributing the goods,. saying her department will be forced to intervene once the donations were "'diverted" to benefit only those who support a particular politician.

"The issue at the local level is always just about attribution or who brought what to whom," she said. "'But I don't mind as long as the goods reach the people and [the claim for credit] is not unfair to other politicians."

"But if they start to use [the relief operations] for their vested interests, we will call their attention and take over the distribution," she said.

Soliman said her staff employed a "tracking system" during relief work to ensure that the goods reach the intended recipients, she added.

Since the DSWD was already a "devolved" agency, the secretary explained, it was mandated to work with governors and mayors in delivering to villages the relief goods it received.

193 dead

The death toll from the devastating landslides and flash floods in Southern Leyte and northeastern Mindanao yesterday rose to at least 193, officials said.

Lerias said reports from various towns showed that 154 people were killed, 18 were missing and 22 were injured.

Another 39 people were killed and at least six remained missing in Mindanao, the Office of Civil Defense said.

Hopes of finding any more survivors were slim, officials said. *Reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Volt Contreras; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau; and AFP*

Where to give donations

The Diocese of Maasin (Southern Leyte) and the Diocese of Surigao (Surigao del Norte and Surigao City) continue to air their appeal for aid for the landslide and flood victims of San Ricardo, San Francisco and other coastal towns in Southern Leyte, and Placer and other towns in Surigao del Norte and Surigao City.

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Fr. Max Casinao, Jr. - Social Action Director - 0919-4995349
Sr. Norie Seit - 0919-2331836 or 053-3812033 or 053- 5708435

2. Diocese of Surigao:

Account Name: Roman Catholic Bishop of Surigao
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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Gas well fumes kill 191 in China

BEIJING—Fumes from a burst gas well in China's southwest that killed at least 191 people left a "death zone" of villages strewn with the bodies of adults and children, some overcome as they tried to flee the clouds of poison, news reports said Friday.

Gas spewed from the well in the Chongqing region as technicians prepared an emergency effort to seal it. But that attempt, scheduled for Friday, was postponed to Saturday as relief officials rushed food and water to 41,000 evacuees living in schools and government buildings.

More than 290 people were hospitalized, many of them children, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Newspaper photos showed children with red faces and their eyes inflamed from chemical burns.

The gas well burst on Tuesday in the town of Gaoqiao, releasing a cloud of natural gas and hydrogen sulfide, according to state media.

"The poisonous gas hovering in the air made an area of 25 square km a death zone, as many villagers were intoxicated by the fumes in their sleep," the China Daily reported.

The hardest-hit area was reportedly the village of Xiaoyang. A reporter for the Shanghai Morning Post wrote of entering the village at midday Thursday and seeing at least six bodies lying beside homes and in fields.

The bodies of a 12-year-old boy and his mother were found on a road, apparently trying to escape, the newspaper said. Dead chickens, pigs, owls and dogs were strewn around the village, many with white foam or puss in their nostrils.

Newspapers also ran pictures of rescue workers dressing the body of an old man who lay face up in an onion patch.

The scale of the catastrophe was huge even by the standards of accident-plagued Chinese industry, where thousands of people are killed every year in coal mine explosions and other disasters.

The cause of the disaster at the Chuandongbei gas field near Chongqing wasn't immediately clear. Xinhua said it involved a drilling mishap that broke open a gas well.

Two of those killed were gas field employees, while the rest were residents of the surrounding area, Xinhua said. *AP*

Boeing jet plunges into sea; 96 dead

COTONOU, Benin—Rescue teams combed cold, dark waters off the West African nation of Benin on Friday in a desperate search for survivors of a plane crash that killed at least 96 people, authorities said.

Transport Minister Ahmed Akobi said 82 people died in Thursday's crash, and state radio confirmed 10 more bodies were pulled from the wreckage off the Atlantic Ocean coast overnight. Most of the casualties were Lebanese headed home for Christmas holidays.

At least 24 people initially survived the accident, Akobi said. But four of them died at hospitals in the commercial capital, Cotonou, state radio said.

With spotlights perched on the beach and flashlights in hand, divers and fishermen searched for survivors through the night, swimming through scattered pieces of luggage, clothes and gift-wrapped presents. Tractors tied chains to parts of the Boeing 727's wreckage, including an engine, in an effort to clear away the wreckage. *AP*

4 Israelis die in bombing

JERUSALEM—Israeli security chiefs met early Friday to discuss retaliatory raids after a Palestinian suicide bombing and an Israeli air strike broke a two-month lull in violence, threatening tentative steps toward renewing peace talks.

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz met the Army chief and other top brass, including the head of the Shin Bet security service and police officials, to discuss retaliation for a suicide bombing near Tel Aviv on Thursday that killed four Israelis.

In Gaza, Palestinians prepared for a mass funeral for three Islamic Jihad militants—one a top commander of the militant group—killed in the Israeli missile strike on Thursday. Two other Palestinian civilians were killed in the air raid. *AP*

California mudslide: 10 missing

SAN BERNARDINO, California—Ten people were missing after a mudslide swept over a Greek Orthodox youth camp, as heavy rains triggered flooding in areas ravaged by deadly wildfires last month.

Of the 24 people who were trapped by the mudslide, 14 were rescued on Thursday from the Saint Sophia Camp in Waterman Canyon, just north of San Bernardino, sheriff's spokesperson Cindy Beavers said. They didn't appear to have serious injuries, she said.

Two rescue teams were trekking by foot through darkness and mud Thursday night in search of the missing 10 people. One team hiked up the canyon and the other hiked down because the road was washed out. *AP*

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Consumer Winners P 20,000	Sales Clerk Winners P 10,000
Catherine Llaune Zone III Bo. Obrero Iloilo City	Ma. Theresa Zaldivar Lady Pharmacy
Teddy Mejarez Baklaw Sur, Kalibo Aklan	Remie Revecencio Farmacia Gomez
Guillermo Gloria Tinabanan, Marabut, Samar	Celine Rosalyes Everwell Drughouse

Mindanao

Consumer Winners P 20,000	Sales Clerk Winners P 10,000
Generosa Magno Brgy. Pamanlinan Bislig City	Emily Sotel Antonio Mktg.
Jocelyn Ansao 65 Morales Compound Talon-talon, Zamboanga	Grace Villanueva United Pharmacy
Josephine Escarton Blk 5 Baybay Camague, Iligan City	Josie Goleno Loy's Pharmacy

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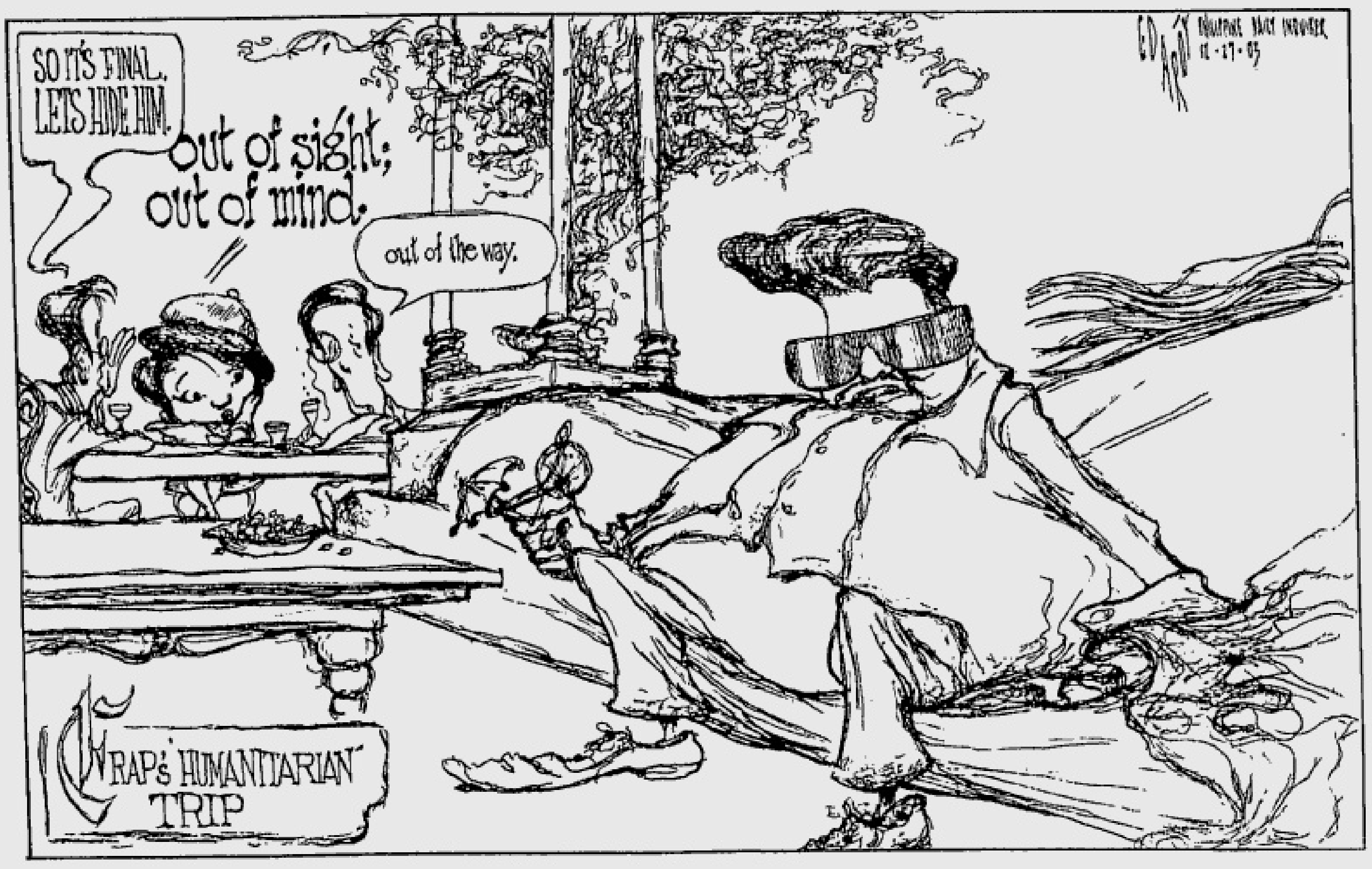
SO IT'S FINAL, LETS HIDE HIM.
out of sight; out of mind.
out of the way.
ERAP'S HUMANITARIAN TRIP
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Ill-timed flip-flop

Editorial

TO THIS day, Malacañang denies that it had a hand in the Sandiganbayan's decision to allow disgraced former President Joseph Estrada to leave for the United States to have his arthritic knees treated. Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Thursday the permission was part of the judicial process and President Macapagal-Arroyo was respecting the court's decision. "The President has always expressed humanitarian consideration," Bunye said. "It just so happens the decision of the Sandiganbayan is well along the lines pursued by the President."

Estrada has also denied that the court's decision was part of any political deal he had struck with the administration. And for once he had some kind words for Ms Macapagal and the anti-graft court that is trying his plunder case. He said Ms Macapagal had nothing to do with the Sandiganbayan's reversal of an earlier decision denying his petition to travel to the United States. "She has nothing to do with it," he said. "The Sandiganbayan justices made the decision on the basis of the merits of the case."

The Filipino people certainly hope so. With the judiciary being battered by allegations of wrongdoing from many fronts, the last thing it needs is confirmation that it can be swayed by money or Malacañang. Indeed any evidence showing that the Sandiganbayan had been influenced by the Palace would confirm what Estrada has been claiming all along: first, that he is being tried and held behind bars not because he had accepted hundreds of millions in bribe but because Ms Macapagal wants to stay in power; and second, that the administration is using the courts as its willing instrument for political persecution.

Despite their assurances to the contrary, administration officials have made it quite hard for the public to believe that the Sandiganbayan's Special Division had arrived at its decision independently. While no one has recorded any clandestine calls made by the Palace to the Sandiganbayan, the administration made sure the justices got the message loud and clear that it would welcome a favorable decision on Estrada's motion for reconsideration. Ms Macapagal, for one, has been talking about "reconciliation" with everyone fighting or opposing her administration, be they rebels or political rivals and their supporters. And she has staked a claim to being President of the forces that launched both Edsa II, which catapulted her to the presidency, and "Edsa III," which tried to topple her.

Other top officials have been more direct and open in pushing for Estrada's US trip. When Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo charged last month that such a trip was being offered by the administration as part of a political settlement, Palace chief of staff Rigoberto Tiglao said he "personally" thought that it "might not be a bad idea." The President's deputy spokesperson Ricardo Saludo quickly picked up the line, saying it would push forward the reconciliation plan.

But it was Housing Secretary Michael Defensor who seemed to have put the pieces together with an extraordinary display of solicitousness for the man whom the administration supposedly wants to put away permanently for plunder. Around the middle of last month, Defensor urged government prosecutors to join Estrada's lawyers in filing a formal motion asking the court to allow the former president to travel. Then he was reported to have gifted Estrada with a golf car to help him move around. And the other day he was said to have offered the administration's help in facilitating the issuance of a US visa to Estrada.

Given all this talk about reconciliation and these expressions of concern over Estrada's deteriorating medical condition in this election season, could anyone be blamed for smelling something rotten being cooked? It may be unfair to suspect the Sandiganbayan of accommodating Malacañang's wishes, but the timing of the decision could not have been worse.

The reason the justices gave for changing their decision is strained. Except for Estrada's medical condition, nothing has really changed to justify a reversal of their initial decision. Granted that his illness has become life-threatening, the fact remains that he can be treated here. His right to choose his doctor is not in anyway impaired by keeping him in the Philippines. On the other hand, the people's quest for justice will be compromised if he decides not to return.

In this political season, it is easier to believe that Santa Claus is for real than that the good breaks going Estrada's way are all a lucky coincidence.

The Feliciano Commission report

Separate Opinion

Isagani A. Cruz

JUSTICE Florentino P. Feliciano sent me a copy of the report of the commission that bears his name which was created to investigate the Oakwood rebellion that occurred on July 27, 2003. Consisting of no less than 148 pages, excluding the also voluminous annexes, the report is an exhaustive study of that historic incident, its nature, purpose, justification, execution, and other related matters that shook the nation for several tense hours on that fateful day. It also appropriately contains the commission's findings and recommendations, some of them incisive and reproachful, for the avoidance of similar disturbances in the future.

I gathered from a brief conversation with my good friend that he was rather disappointed over the meager attention paid by the public to the report, which was the result of serious efforts exerted by the commission to comply with its instructions under Administrative Order No. 78 of President Macapagal-Arroyo to get to the bottom of the Oakwood affair. Considering its length, I can understand why the media could devote only so much of their limited space and time to it, confining themselves to its more important points. At the risk of also disappointing Justice Feliciano, I myself can make only a sketchy comment on this praiseworthy work of the commission.

The commission conducted its investigation from Aug. 12 to Oct. 14, 2003 and submitted its report three days later. It held 20 days of hearings, during which 95 witnesses testified and offered other kinds of evidence. Besides watching several video exhibits, it also visited several military camps in Metro Manila, Isabela City, Zamboanga City and Basilan. Among the many documentary exhibits it studied was Senate Final Report No. 51 re "Coup Rumors and Alleged Anomalies in the AFP Retirement and Separation and Benefits System" prepared by the Blue Ribbon Committee.

The takeover of Oakwood by the rebel group was "not spontaneous," according to the commission, but part of a plan prepared well in advance to take control of the government by force. That plan called for the reinstatement of Joseph Estrada as president of the Philippines and his replacement after three days by a 15-member military council. Groups identified with Sen. Gregorio Honasan and Erap were apparently expected to support a replication of "people power" to oust the legitimate government. It also found that recruitment of disgruntled military personnel had started months before, and there was also evidence of the purchase ahead of time of rebel flags, arm bands, uniforms and combat boots, expensive communication equipment and vehicles, the reservation and occupation of rooms at Oakwood, and the rebels' use of two staging areas in Dasmariñas Village and Mandaluyong City.

The commission concluded from these findings that the rebellion had a political motive and was not triggered by the dissatisfaction of the rebels with the failure of the government to correct the corruption in the armed forces. The rebels' charges "referred to the RSBS, the military procurement system, particularly the practice of 'conversion,' the transfer of arms and ammunition to unauthorized persons, and anomalies in the construction and repair of various facilities in the Marine Air Base."

Some of these complaints, said the commission, "are not without foundation." The fact that the rebels' real purpose was essentially political "does not diminish the reality and legality of their grievances." Analyzing such grievances, it found that they deserved further investigation, particularly since the adverse recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Committee on the same subject had largely not been implemented.

Among the recommendations of the commission are a more effective examination of the complaints of corruption in the armed forces; increased efforts of commanding officers to prevent military adventurism; appointment of civilians as secretary of national defense and head of the Nica; strict application of the law against coup plotters; enforcement of the political neutrality of the armed forces; liquidation of the RSBS and return of the soldiers' contributions with accrued interest; establishment of an AFP Service and Insurance System; and full implementation of the report of the Blue Ribbon Committee.

I agree in general with the report of the Feliciano Commission, but I would like to ask just this one question to satisfy my curiosity. Why was there no recommendation for the investigation and possible prosecution of Honasan despite the existence of probable cause of his connection with the Oakwood rebellion? Honasan himself contributed to that suspicion by going underground for fear of being arrested, but the commission seems to have regarded him with a most lenient eye. I keep wondering about this.

Shoppers' paradise

Get Real

Solita Collas-Monsod

WHETHER we approve of it or not, shopping is a—if not the—major activity during the Christmas season, eclipsing even politics and crime in the public's attention. It is one of my least-favored activities, but at this time, there is no escaping it. Except this year was much more of a learning experience for me, because aside from the usual haunts, I also included (for the first time in at least 30 years) Chinatown (Binondo), Quiapo and Divisoria. Oh boy, did I learn.

For traders, big or small, these are their main source of supply. But most of those who shop there are housewives who know where the best bargains can be found. Among the businesspersons who frequent these areas is Nene Lee, who runs her family owned department store in Naga. It was she who offered to bring me around, when I expressed an interest (my friends from 30 years before had sworn never to bring me with them again, because I was forever gagging at the smells, or asking to sit down; as I said, I'm not a good shopper).

But my interest in going to Quiapo and Divisoria was reawakened, in the first place, by other friends. It started with Maridol Mabanta, who is also my neighbor in Subic. One weekend, when I bemoaned the fact that I forgot to bring a pair of jeans, she said it was no problem. She had six pairs with her, bought from the Greenhills *tiangge*, and she offered to let me have one. Not only would they fit well, she said, they were also convenient for travel (one didn't have to bother with zippers—they could be just pulled down and back up and didn't pool around one's legs on the toilet floor). To top it all, they cost only P500 each (the dressy version cost P100 more).

At those prices, what's there to complain about? So I asked her to buy me four of the "ordinary" and one of the "dress" pants (I still avoid shopping like the plague).

When she sent me the stuff, she charged me only P400 for the dress jeans. When I asked why, since I thought the dressy ones were more expensive, she explained that she had bought the ordinary jeans at Greenhills, but there were no dress jeans there, so she asked another friend, Inday Gabaldon, to look for them. Inday, who is an inveterate shopper, chanced upon them in Divisoria—and discovered that what was selling for P600 in Greenhills could be bought for P400 in Divisoria, while the P500 jeans were going for P320. Wow.

Naturally, I wanted to brag about my "find" with other friends, but it turned out that they had discovered the same thing much earlier—some in Greenhills, and some in Divisoria. Also naturally, the ones who bought in Divisoria had the bragging rights over the ones who bought in Greenhills.

That's when I resolved to see these places for myself, and when Nene Lee offered to bring me around, I agreed with alacrity. And I must say that I came away truly impressed. "Shoppers' paradise" is the term that comes to mind. Almost every conceivable item one could want is available there (no cars, though): electronic products, clothing, toys, watches, handbags, jewelry, name it. I was reminded of how Hong Kong used to be, and later South Korea, before they achieved tiger status.

My shop-wise friends tell me that the goods sold in Divisoria and Quiapo are oftentimes cheaper than those sold in Shenzhen. (There are speculations that either the goods are smuggled, or they are a cover for drug shipments, and so are sold here for next to nothing. Take your pick.) Even if they are not cheaper than in Shenzhen, it really doesn't matter. Our stallholders and sellers here are much more charming than their surly Chinese counterparts, not to mention that they also speak English better (at least for now since the Chinese are going all out to learn the language) than in any other potential shopping area in the region.

An idea dawned: Why not form package tours that include shopping in these areas? Why not have night markets, like they had in Hong Kong, for 24-hour shopping? When I accidentally met Tourism Secretary Dick Gordon, I enthusiastically broached the idea—only to be met with a been-there-done-that look from the usually enthusiastic Dick. Apparently, he had already suggested the idea to travel and tour operators, but they were lukewarm. Pity. I'm sure that something can be arranged, and that Manila Mayor Lito Atienza would be cooperative. No question that it would be a surefire tourist attraction. No one can resist a good bargain.

But certain kinks have to be ironed out first. The vendors have to be reminded (as is done in Thailand) that tourists are not to be taken advantage of in any way, because word of mouth can make or break a tourist spot. Second, the authorities must ensure that shoppers can move around freely. Ironically, it is in the areas that are closed to vehicular traffic where pedestrians and shoppers have the most difficulty moving around because the vendors are back to back and almost literally wall-to-wall. A friend tells me that it took her seven minutes to negotiate the three-meter distance from sidewalk to restaurant because there was no room to pass.

And last but not least, there must be a law that requires that expiration dates of perishables be posted on their package, with stiff penalties for non-compliance. It is time consumers here, both Filipino and foreign, get a modicum of protection.

Can we at least try it? There is always hope.

Erap should keep his part of the bargain

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SEATTLE—The wonder of the Internet is that we can keep track of news back home. Everywhere we have been in the West Coast, Filipinos tell us that they avidly follow the news in the Philippines and are eager to discuss the latest events. We read about the decision of the Sandiganbayan to allow former President Estrada to seek medical treatment in the United States for his worsening knee ailment. It was a tough balancing act for the court, as it sought to uphold the demands of justice with humane considerations, and, of course, the spirit of Christmas played a big part. The court recognized the right of the patient to seek a specialist of his confidence, in this case Dr. Christopher Mow of Stanford Hospital, but at the same time imposed a three-month restriction on his trip as well as proper and close monitoring of his movements.

It's a fair deal, but I hope the former President keeps his part of the bargain, unlike Imelda Marcos who wandered to other parts of the world in violation of her agreement with the court, before coming home.

* * *

With my husband's sister and brother-in-law, Julie and Ding Angulo, we drove to Seattle on Christmas Eve to spend a wet rainy Christmas with their son Erwin and his wife, the former Christine Aberin, and their daughter Christiana. Earlier I cited the tensions brought about by the Department of Homeland Security's decision to raise the terrorist alert level from Yellow to Orange. This is supposed to be a vacation for my family, but since we got to the West Coast, many things have happened to heighten tensions.

First there was the earthquake measuring over 6 on the Richter scale that struck Southern California as we left Los Angeles. Luckily the epicenter was in a sparsely populated area, but there were fears about its aftershocks.

Then there was the cancellation of six Paris-Los Angeles flights on Christmas Eve due to fears of possible hijacking by terrorists, leading to the further tightening of security measures in airports across the nation.

To top it all, fears about a new mad-cow disease outbreak in the Pacific Northwest were raised two days before Christmas, after an infected cow was discovered in an obscure town called Mabton, right here in Washington State.

* * *

The timing of the announcement was terrible. It came as folks here were getting ready for a Christmas Eve dinner that invariably features beef as the *pièce de résistance*. Reports said 99 percent of the folks said they were not going to change their menu because of one sick cow, even though 14 countries had already cancelled their beef orders from the United States, led by the biggest importer, Mexico. On Christmas Eve, Christine bought the nine-pound prime rib she served us from her regular butcher just hours before the announcement was made. She served it with Yorkshire pudding and garlic mash potatoes, and we enjoyed it immensely.

One newspaper headline said it for the American nation when it asserted that "life goes on despite the terror alert" and now the mad-cow scare. Americans went on with the gift giving and reunions despite the dangers lurking. Like Filipinos, Americans take crises with a lot of chin-up grit and patience and a touch of fatalism.

* * *

Earlier Ding and Julie took us to a dinner gathering of Filipinos in the suburb of Portland, and it was like being in Manila, except for the cold weather. There were lots of Filipino food like *dinuguan, pancit* and *inihaw na baboy* and even *pichi-pichi* for desert, and we watched the Christmas specials over ABS-CBN via cable TV. Our kind hosts, Artemio Reyes and his wife, the former Evelyn Longalong, hail from San Luis, Pampanga, and San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija, respectively, and have three sons, two of whom have already graduated from the state university and are now holding good jobs. Their youngest is still in seventh grade.

The Reyeses moved to the United States in the mid-'90s, and now live comfortably because of *sipag at tiyaga*, the classic story of hard-working overseas Filipinos. Tem, who trained in RP as an electrical/mechanical engineer, works as a maintenance man in a pharmaceutical company owned by a successful Filipino entrepreneur. Evelyn used to be a practicing dentist in Manila, but since she has not taken the state board here, she works as a caregiver in a nursing home, and does part-time work for old nuns in a convent.

* * *

Evelyn confessed that care-giving is a tough job, especially for a slightly built Pinay like her, as it involves at times assisting 240-pound senior citizens. I asked why she did not seek to a license to practice dentistry, and she said it's not so easy as it means enrolling for about two years in an American college and then taking the tough state board exams.

In this sense, the Filipino dieticians practicing in the United States are far luckier. For as Los Angeles-based insurance man Ric Guzman, a native of San Juan, Ilocos Sur, and his UST-trained dietician-wife Nimfa Sales-Guzman, narrated to me, the Philippine Board of Dietetics, then chaired by well-known Makati dietician Sanirose Singson Orbeta, which is under our Professional Regulatory Board, worked some years back for a reciprocity agreement between the two governments. Nimfa, who works as an administrator in the federal government, said this has allowed Philippine-accredited dieticians seeking to practice in the United States to skip US schooling and just take the state board exams. Perhaps the Board of Dentistry in Manila could work for such an agreement in order to help dentist-immigrants to practice in the United States.

The 'giving' card

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"GIFTS that keep on giving" is how some have dubbed gift items produced by communities and cooperatives and usually marketed by NGOs or social development organizations. This is because the profits made on the sale of such items go not to the pockets of entrepreneurs or shopping mall magnates but are instead channeled back to the NGOs and communities, used to support the people's income-generating efforts, the development of their localities, as well to organizing more communities so that they, too, become productive and self-governing units.

But development-oriented bazaars are few and far between, and busy shoppers, however their good intentions, don't have time to seek out NGOs and other marketing groups selling meaningful products. And while giving to the needy and deserving may be uppermost in the minds of many this season, seeking out groups to help can be time-consuming. NGOs and charitable institutions, on the other hand, cannot afford to hire public relations people or launch outreach campaigns. Bridging this gap, though, is a group of finance and telecoms experts, led by former banker Philip Camara and his partners Bok Barrameda and Ching Camara, the driving forces behind RemitCard, described as "a new text-based remittance card that lets people 'text' their gifts or financial payments to institutions such as their favorite charity, school organizations, and eventually, even their insurer or bank."

"How do private companies raise money from the public?" asks Camara rhetorically during a recent interview. "They launch an IPO and, on the basis of their track record and potential earnings, invite the public to invest in them." Then Camara, who left his banking career to engage in rural development in his native Zambales and then got embroiled in politics, began to wonder if NGOs, which do so much to help in the development of communities in need, could not do the same thing.

"How about NGOs? How can they raise money for themselves when their time is spent on projects and advocacies?" RemitCard, he says, can act like an NGO's "IPO."

* * *

AT THE RemitCard's launching last Dec. 8, four NGOs with national reach were introduced as partners: Haribon Foundation, Tahanang Walang Hagdanan, World Vision and Jesuit Volunteers Philippines Foundation. RemitCards come in two denominations, P300 and P500. Potential donors and supporters of these four NGOs and other future partners of RemitCard need only buy the card meant for the organization they wish to help, then scratch off a PIN number at the back of the card. To "remit" the amount one wishes to donate, the buyer need only text: RC, the code for the organization, the card PIN number, the buyer's name, address, and phone. Then send the text message to 211 for Smart users or 2333 for Globe. Smart and Sun users can also use text number 09173200022. The card buyer will then receive a confirmation message.

Once the card buyer texts the information, the organization automatically receives a donation of either P300 or P500, though a P38 fixed fee is assessed for every card, to cover printing and distribution costs as well as a service fee. Supporters can buy as many cards as they want, and the NGOs themselves are encouraged to market their own RemitCards, though these will also be available in places where pre-paid cards and other cell phone paraphernalia are sold. Right now, RemitCards for the four NGOs are available at Rustan's Supermarkets, SM Malls, Shangri-la Mall, and True Value stores.

For the Christmas season, RemitCard even prepared Christmas cards with RemitCard inserts which the organizations could market.

* * *

ASIDE FROM GIVING potential donors a "painless" way to support an NGO or a cause they believe in, RemitCard also provides a valuable service to the NGOs. Their software allows them to keep a list of all donors with their addresses and phone numbers, which many NGOs have neither personnel nor technology to prepare.

All they ask of potential NGO partners, says Camara, is that they have a fairly wide network to assist in the marketing and distribution of RemitCards. While they charge no fee for NGO partners, Camara says they ask that these groups help expand their reach around the country. For the moment, Camara says they are preparing to partner with the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) Philippines and are in talks with different alumni associations. Once a memorandum of agreement ("it's just a page," says Camara) is signed between RemitCard and the organization, all the NGO has to do is to sit down with RemitCard's designers to determine what the cards will look like and the message the NGO wants to convey when the donation is acknowledged. Camara is even thinking of coming up with a special, thicker RemitCard that can double as a membership card for the buyer.

* * *

CAMARA admits that the service fee charged for every RemitCard used is not their primary reason for getting into this market. Instead, he says their reason for launching RemitCard is really to "make our mark as a settlement advisor," that is as some sort of middleman between buyers and retailers, or donors and NGOs, as the case may be.

In "mobile commerce," as these transactions are better known, the settlement advisor settles competing claims made by buyers and sellers, keeping track of important information such as "who owes whom what amount."

"The platform could be used for payments, for marketing to OFWs, remit payments for college plans, etc.," says Camara. Indeed, while RemitCard allows ordinary people to use texting for their financial transactions, the partnership with NGOs also allows them to employ technology in the service of charity, development and humanity.

Court martial

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

The following is an excerpt from a translation by my late brother, Umberto G. Lammoglia, who spent the last years of his life translating items pertaining to the Revolution as they appeared in the newspaper El Comercio. Note that Christmas 1896 must have been bleak for many of our forefathers.

SATURDAY, December 26, 1896

Events of the Day

At 8:00 this morning, under the presidency of the Lt. Col. of the Cavalry, Sr. Togores, a regular court martial was convened to try the on-going case against the known agitator, Jose Rizal Mercado y Alonso, natural of Calamba, Laguna, and by profession a physician.

The advocate, Lt. Sr. Alcober, presented the fiscal charges in a brilliant discourse. After examining the evidence, he spoke relative to the bad antecedents of Rizal, one of the principal—if not the principal—figure in the revolutionary movement. He analyzed the connection between the movement and the accused, probing the extent of their ties. (Has anyone written about Bonifacio's responsibility for this perception?) He identified the causes of the rebellion, declaring that it was only right that the accused pay his dues to Justice, as any debtor should.

Finally, Sr. Alcober qualified the accused as being the author of the crimes of rebellion and illicit association, the latter being the means for the commission of the first. As a consequence, and by virtue of the aggravating circumstances, he cited Article 11 of the Penal Code, with the crime of illicit association considered as a civil liability, while that of rebellion calling for the death penalty...

Afterwards, Lt. Sr. Tatiel de Andrade of the Artillery stood up and proceeded to the defense, extracting the best points possible for his arguments. And before the end of the trial, Rizal spoke for quite a while, disclaiming all responsibility, manifesting that his name had been usurped, attributing to letters and poetry which were not his. (So who forged them or attributed them to him?) The Filipinos who had risen up in arms against Spain he called savage, victims of broken promises and abuses from vindictive persons. He felt certain that there were no honored persons of authority or representation who would be sympathetic to his ideas.

At the close of the proceedings, the court retired to deliberate secretly and come to judgment about which we will promptly inform the public. The ample hall of the royal barracks where the trial was held was completely full.

* * *

Monday, Dec. 28, 1896

Events of the Day: 108 Dead

The losses inflicted on the rebels in the encounters of the last two days, in the provinces to the north of Manila, have reached 108 verified dead, with our own forces suffering several wounded only.

From Nueva Ecija:

General Ros, commanding general in the provinces of Central Luzon, yesterday telegrammed the most excellent Captain General, reporting that in the barrio of Bunaldoc, in the town of San Miguel de Mayumo, the night before last, a party of rebels attacked the forces stationed there and were repulsed. Other small groups of insurgents sporadically attempted to take other points in the province of Nueva Ecija.

Our columns, under the orders of Lt. Col Sr. Oyarzabal, continue to pursue the enemy forces.

From Manila:

Yesterday morning, forces of our army left Caloocan and Mariquina, and made a combined reconnaissance of the town of Caloocan, including the barrios of Balintauac, Baesa, Bago Bantay, Talipapa and Banlat, and the sitios of Caingin and Candiong. They also surveyed the districts of Legaspi and Balara, located in the hills of San Mateo and Montalban, as well as the sitios of Cruz Matigas and Pasong Tamo.

Various groups of insurgents were encountered, some as large as 300-man strong; these were dispersed and scattered, accounting for 30 dead verified and seven captured.

* * *

Monday, Dec. 28, 1896

Events of the Day: Court Martial

Today, at 8:00 in the morning, in the Hall of Flags of the Cuartel de España under the presidency of Lt. Col Don Antonio Zegri Moreno of the Infantry, a regular court martial was convened to try the case against the native corporal from regiment No. 74, Geronimo Cristobal y Burgos, for the crime of rebellion.

Tomorrow, at 8:00 in the morning, in the Hall of Flags of the Cuartel de España, a court martial shall be held to try the case against the native clergymen, Severino Diaz, Inocencio Herrera and Gabriel Prieto, and the citizens Manuel Abella, Domingo Abella, Tomas Prieto, Florencio Lerma, Macario Valentin, Camilo Pacol, Cornelio Mercado, Mariano Melgarejo and Mariano Ordenanza, for the crime of rebellion.

Acting as president of court will be Lt. Col Don Eduardo Moreno Estellera; as directors, Capts. D. Fernando Sanz Truero, D. Leandro Hebrero y Rodriguez, D. Miguel Perez Subiran, D. Enrique Fernandez Rodriquez, D. Camilo Carretero y Cerda and D. Luis Villanos Puig; and as petitioners, D. Jose Mera de Benitez and D. Gabriel Peñuelas y Alvarez.

Divisoria

YOUNG BLOOD

Anne Lan Kagahastian-Candelaria

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

IT WAS four years since the last time I went to Divisoria. Then I was eight months pregnant with my second child. My husband and I wanted to buy baby stuff in Manila's bargain oasis. The Philippine economy hadn't recovered yet from the Asian financial crisis. Money was hard to come by. People felt the crunch, regardless of social class.

I remember very little about that trip, although I can recall that we were able to buy everything our baby needed: several pairs of clothing, booties, mittens, linens, towels, cloth diapers, baby bottles and a mosquito net that looked like an oversized lace umbrella—all for P1,000! We were so happy to have spent less than our budget that we felt all our exertions, the haggling and the heat were worth it.

Recently we decided to visit Divisoria again to look for a Christmas tree that would get our two boys excited. They had been praying hard for a big tree that would please Santa Claus. We planned on buying a big tree that was also reasonably priced.

Instead of bringing the car, we decided to take the jeepney, anticipating heavy traffic as well as the problem of finding parking space. When we got down in front of the Tutuban Center, we decided to head for the sidewalks instead of going to the mall. After all, we were there for bargains.

Just off the old train track, a small store was selling all sorts of Christmas decorations and, yes, trees. I squeezed my way inside the store while my husband waited outside. It took me ages to decide which tree, ornaments and lights to buy.

Outside the store, I found my husband standing very still, as if mesmerized. I tried to see what he was staring at. It was hard to look through the crowd, but then I saw her. She was beautiful! Her presence almost made the throng of people disappear. All I could see was her.

After a while, I told my husband it was time for us to go. With his eyes till fixed on her, he said, "She should not be working in a place like this. She should be at home where it is safe for girls her age."

He was right. This little girl, so fragile, so small, so beautiful, and bravely standing behind her *kariton* under the heat of the midday sun, should not have been in a place like that. I said, "She should not be working, period. She should be studying."

As we walked past her and her wares, I was tempted to ask how old she was and where her parents were. She must have been 5 or 6 years old and I guessed that her mother was somewhere near, attending to customers.

This is a common experience in Third World countries. Poverty drives parents to discourage their children from going to school even if public schools do not charge tuition. They need extra hands and warm bodies to help them earn a living.

I've read a lot of articles and books saying that the only way out of poverty is education. But reality does not only bite, it stings. Going to school means giving the child school materials like pencils, notebooks, paper and a school bag. How can a child remember what was taught in math, for example, if he cannot write it down because he has no paper?

A lot has been written about how bad public education has become. In an international test conducted in 1999 for 10-year-old students in math and science, the Philippines ranked 36th among the 38 participating countries. But the depreciating quality of public education in our elementary and secondary levels should not be solely blamed on the government. Just imagine trying to manage 17 million out of the 19 million Filipino children enrolled in our public elementary and high schools.

But even with a high enrollment figure, the drop-out rate remains high, especially in the elementary level. Out of 10 children who enroll in Grade 1, only 6 finish Grade 6. It has been estimated that 20 years from now, 4 out of every 10 Filipinos would barely be able to read and write.

My eldest, who is 7, and his brother, who is 4, keep asking me why some mommies and daddies like to have many children when they only end up hungry and nasty all the time. Why can't all children go to school and play after school? my sons want to know.

I have tried hard to find an acceptable answer, but I can't. Our children cannot be blamed for our own poverty. They did not beg or demand to be born into this world even when we were not ready to have them. Adult behavior is indeed more confusing than that of a child's.

I've been a staunch advocate of empowering public schools through the re-integration of the local community into the affairs of the school. My work has given me the opportunity to talk with various public school principals, teachers, children and parents who are involved in education through the Parent-Teacher Conference Associations. But my trip to Divisoria made me realize that I haven't sat down and talked with the parents and children who are not in school.

After we got our shopping done, we took another jeepney home. Less than 10 minutes later, a skinny and grimy boy of about 10, wearing tattered clothes and no slippers, boarded the jeepney, got down on his knees, and started dusting the shoes of all the passengers on board, hoping to get some loose change in return. This made my heart heavier.

The beautiful girl on the street and the handsome boy in the jeep kept me awake that night. I had to write about the experience at one in the morning if only to unburden myself. But I was wrong. The more I wrote, the more troubled I became.

But I welcome having this troubled spirit. This restlessness keeps me sane in a society where the only thing that matters is survival.

I am sure there are many more of our children roaming the streets, trying to survive in the urban jungle they call home. These children are our children, and they have grown weary of working long hours in the streets while their minds yearn for knowledge that will help them comprehend our world.

But how can our children understand justice if all they see around them is violence? How can our children feel loved when all they can feel is hunger? How can our children be peace-loving if they must live by their wits just to survive?

We expect a lot from our political leaders and our government and we blame them for our own poverty of body and spirit. But when we point a finger to blame somebody, we forget that our other fingers point to ourselves.

How can we have a better country, a peaceful nation and a just society, if we take for granted our responsibility as parents to provide for and protect our children's rights and make sure that they become better persons?

Anne Lan Kagahastian-Candelaria, 28, is officer in charge of the Ateneo Center for Educational Development. She also teaches political science at the Ateneo de Manila University.

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DOH's 'Iwas Paputok' drive still on

WE thank the INQUIRER for the support it has accorded our campaign to reduce New Year's Day injuries from pyrotechnic devices and indiscriminate discharge of firearms as reported in the article of Blanche Rivera titled, "DOH gives up on banning of firecrackers." (PDI, 11/26/03) There are, however, a number of extremely important points that need to be corrected.

The Department of Health remains firm in its position on firecrackers which is to discourage their use altogether, even if some of these pyrotechnics are considered legal by recent legislation. Hence, we push year after year the "Iwas Paputok" campaign every time the holiday season sets in, as it just did.

In lieu of detonating firecrackers, we urge our countrymen to enjoy alternative ways of celebrating the season, such as holding street parties and producing noise through banging of tin pots and blowing of horns (*torotot*). People can even opt to enjoy the impressive, organized fireworks displays sponsored by shopping malls, local government units and other establishments.

The DOH believes that not a single firecracker can be certified as safe. Fireworks-related injuries remain to be a public health problem even with the existence of Republic Act 7138, also known as the Anti-Firecracker Law.

The DOH is very serious in its objective to further decrease the incidence of firecracker-related injuries and deaths.

Contrary to what was written, the DOH is not giving up on banning firecrackers. Although the focus of this year's campaign is on stray bullets, hence the emphasis on not firing guns, the DOH did not leave out the other facets of the campaign, such as firecrackers of all kinds, including the seemingly innocuous *watusi*, which has been largely advocated against by our agency due to hazards posed by ingestion of these pyrotechnics.

In fact, the "Iwas Paputok" campaign is now on its ninth year and cases, including stray bullet injuries, have been on the downtrend each year.

—YOLANDA E. OLIVEROS, M.D.,
head executive assistant,
Office of the Secretary,
Department of Health,
Building 1, San Lorenzo
Compound, Rizal Avenue,
Sta. Cruz, Manila

Hard questions to answer

I'M 81 years old with 27 years of government service under President Magsaysay's Presidential Arm on Community Development, the defunct PACD, and had followed Philippine government affairs since the political squabble between Quezon and Osmeña for political supremacy that finally ended in their coalition. Except for the Tayug, Pangasinan incident in 1931, the Asedillo Sakdalista uprising and the Kamlon banditry, peace and tranquility reigned all over the archipelago.

Now we are plagued with dissension, corruption and criminality of every shape and form, including rebellion. Our nation is being dragged into the vortex of a giant whirlpool and there appears to be no way out of it. What has gone wrong?

I am not really superstitious but I believe that the root cause of the nation's escalating troubles is what I call as Quezon's doctrine. The devil himself must have been behind the fiery Quezon when he said in a Nostradamic discourse, that he would rather see the Philippines run like hell by Filipinos than run like heaven by Americans.

Our leaders that time could have waited 10 years more for the return of normalcy and stabilization of a war-ravaged world. Our woes began that fateful July 4, 1946 when the Stars and Stripes was hauled down from the Philippine skies. Our leaders' haste after these 56 years of so-called independence have placed Filipinos in a boiling cauldron of troubles cooking in hell. Quezon's prophetic words became an evil spell and a cruel jinx. For how can 10 presidential administrations beginning with Roxas' fail? Yes, we see some signs of progress, concrete superhighways, high-rise edifices, world-class hotels, airports and tourist spots. But what worth are they to millions living in cardboard and tin can shanties and hovels, and with only bubbles of air in their stomachs?

There was one among the 10, a president of true grit who could have given the common *tao* ample clothing on his back, a better roof over his head and more benefits from the laws of the land, but he died a questionable death. The rest have miserably failed. Even the blind can see the evidence of their failures, in the enormous foreign debts in the huge yearly budgetary deficits, and ultimately in the chaos we are in. Where did all the money go? Or are there others keeping Jose Velarde and Jose Pidal accounts? The two are multi-billion-dollar questions Filipinos are waiting for answers to.

—ANGEL D. MAHINAY,
Westren Poblacion,
6302 Alburquerque, Bohol

Showing a lot of cleavage unnecessary for good entertainment

CONCERTS of foreign artists in our country are really a come-on. They project an international image for the Philippines in the global scene. They can actually contribute to government efforts to increase tourism activity in the country.

Tourism is a form of cultural exchange and among the elements of culture involved is the way of dressing. We would rather that we influence foreigners in our way of dressing than the other way around. As it is now, the Filipino youth are slowly losing their sense of modesty in clothing precisely because of these foreign artists. My sister watched the concert of Mariah Carey last October and she said that it was really good music and entertainment. However, Carey's clothes were revealing, most of the time showing her cleavage.

Can our local producers see through all the details of the concert production, including costumes? The Filipino young are very perceptive and they might think that since an acclaimed international artist dresses that way, it is the right way to dress up.

Let's get some things straight. One's way of dressing should be a form of self-expression. We express what is human and enhance our God-given physical attributes through our clothes. Showing one's private parts may unleash baser instincts in some people.

We are proud of our very own acclaimed singer, Lea Salonga. She has always worn elegant gowns in her performances. She wears what is fitting as she renders songs: a sublime expression of the human spirit.

—MARIA VICTORIA P. TIBON,
27 Camia St., Lumangbayan,
Executive Village,
Barrio Mayamot, Antipolo;
ALMA P. NODERAMA,
31 S. Guzman cor.
G. Reyes Streets, San Juan,
Metro Manila

Flawed appreciation of economic realities

IN HIS column titled "Tariff reversals," related to the recently signed Executive Order 241, (PDI, 11/24/03) former Economic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito presented gross inaccuracies in his historical outline of Philippine tariff policy. For example, Habito claimed that the Philippines was late in lowering tariffs, resulting in our neighbors' growing much faster because they had lowered their tariffs ahead of us. The opposite is true. The Philippines undertook the most aggressive tariff reduction program in the last 10 years without regard for the economic upheavals of the Asian crisis of 1997 and the global slowdown that followed and the 9/11 tragedy that affected worldwide business. The World Trade Report of 2003 published by the World Trade Organization shows that the MFN statutory applied rates for all products averaged 16.8 percent for Thailand, 7.3 percent for Malaysia, 6.9 percent for Indonesia and only 5.7 percent for the Philippines.

For industrial products only, the average is 15.5 percent for Thailand, 8.1 percent for Malaysia, 6.7 percent for Indonesia and only 5.2 percent for the Philippines. Similarly, the maximum applied tariff rates for industrial products for these countries are 300 percent for Malaysia, 170 percent for Indonesia, 80 percent for Thailand and only 30 percent for the Philippines. Therefore, not only do these countries have higher average applied rates, they also have much higher maximum rates applied to industries they consider strategic and therefore to be nurtured. By having a much slower pace in reducing their tariffs while developing their infrastructures, these countries were able to achieve substantially higher growth rates than the Philippines, thus contradicting the simplistic economic prescription that lower tariffs result in higher growth.

His pronouncements betray a flawed appreciation of economic realities. Import substitution addresses the local market which is a primary concern of most business enterprises and economic activities because they provide substantial employment and contribute to government revenues in order to improve infrastructures and competitiveness. Exports are of course important to supplement the domestic market demand, and we should not belittle that our exports amounted to 14 percent of GDP in 1985.

Habito claims that the TRP was a "calculated move." If so, its implementation certainly had been very imprudent, evidenced by its lack of monitoring and review activities which could have prevented the massive losses of industrial and agricultural capacities and employment, until EO 241 was finally issued. Even when he mentioned Chile as a paradigm, it is important to note that the finance minister of Chile who advocated trade liberalization, was careful to mention that they first had to make sure that the inputs to industry like infrastructures and services were globally competitive—which is not the case here. If we must move forward, we must start with the correct step, and not with just any willful careless step!

His assumption that a uniform and low tariff rate will eliminate technical smuggling and even reduce corruption is contradicted by the massive smuggling that continues to evade the payment of the 10-percent VAT, the subsequent output VATs and income taxes. Smuggling today is a primary scourge of industry and agriculture. Curiously, a higher tariff will in fact combat technical smuggling by making the under-declaration or partial declaration of shipments expensive enough to become a deterrent.

Now that Habito had succeeded in lowering tariffs to the present 5.7 percent being so close to his magic 5 percent, why do we see our competitiveness being further eroded instead of being enhanced? Why are investments going elsewhere in Asean or to China and India where the tariffs are higher? Surely, reality dictates that we look at other factors of competitiveness particularly our costs of infrastructures and services as critical components. Branding business as "protectionist," "rent-seeking," or "inefficient" even when they employ state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities, has no basis in fact, and we should demand an honest search of why we remain noncompetitive in factors outside the control of the productive sector.

—MENELEO CARLOS JR.,
co-convenor, Fair Trade Alliance,
c/o Philippine Rural
Reconstruction Movement, PRRM
Headquarters, 56 Mother Ignacia
Ave. corner Dr. Lascano St.,
Quezon City

Paoay rally misdirected

I WRITE in reference to the article "1,000 Paoay folk protest misuse of meager funds" by Cristina Arzadon of the PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, (PDI, 12/4/03) regarding a rally in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, aimed at discrediting my administration.

First and foremost, it is made to appear that a substantial number of my townmates attended the rally when the few who joined the activity are members of a group claiming to be apolitical but are actually identified with my political opponent, Bonifacio Carpio Clemente, who lost in the past two elections but has been very desperate in his efforts to grab the mayoralty seat from this administration.

The main issue at the rally was the alleged malversation committed by the previous municipal treasurer of Paoay. May I state that it was I who discovered the anomaly and reported this immediately to the Commission on Audit.

The municipal treasurer was replaced by the Department of Finance upon my request and I initiated the filing of charges against her before the Ombudsman. These and other false accusations were raised against me by this same group during the last elections but the people of Paoay know the truth and are smarter than this group would want to believe.

It would seem that my opponents are bent on tarnishing the image of my administration, using desperate maneuvers despite the fact that the campaign period has not even started yet.

—REGINILA NENUCA
V. EVANGELISTA,
mayor, Paoay, Ilocos Norte

I checked my figures with the rally organizers and they said that the crowd numbered more than 2,000 based on an actual head count. A policeman estimated the crowd to be less than 2,000. My own estimate was around 1,000.

The story did say that lawyer Ferdinand Ignacio, counsel of Bangon-Paoay Movement, was closely identified with Bonifacio Clemente, the mayor's political rival.

—CRISTINA ARZADON,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Hindrance to implementing RA 9147

I WAS greatly disappointed while watching an episode on Nov. 15 of "Magandang Gabi Bayan," to learn that 28 months after Republic Act No. 9147 otherwise known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, was signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo, its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) has not been finalized yet by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In the meantime, our prized fauna are disappearing from our forests because they are being sold openly in the markets of Cebu and Cartimar in Pasay City. The excuse being given by the officials who are supposed to apprehend the parties involved in the selling of our rare birds is the absence of such IRR.

—PAUL R. MORTEL,
MBLA Court,
Malanday, Marikina City

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Pollution spreads as Asian economies boom

FEATURE

Jason Szep

SINGAPORE—Every two years, Indonesia loses about four million hectares (15,500 square miles) of forest, an area roughly the size of Switzerland, to rapacious logging.

Skies in northern China glow orange in sandstorms that cross the Pacific and lay dust on the western United States. In Hong Kong, raw sewage bobs in its pearl-blue harbor. From inner Mongolia to the Indian subcontinent and tropical Southeast Asia, says one senior United Nations environmental official, the region's ecology and environment is deteriorating as its factories and economies boom.

Although governments are rolling out unprecedented initiatives to tackle Asian pollution—underscored by a meeting of Southeast Asian environment ministers in mid-December in Myanmar—the policies are often badly enforced, the official adds. "Things could get worse before they get better," Ravi Sawhney, director of the environment and sustainable development division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific, or Unescap, told Reuters.

Sawhney is studying Asia's environment for the UN "State of the Environment Report" released every five years. Although the next report is not due until 2005, Sawhney said indications point to a broad-based worsening in environmental conditions.

"There are policy initiatives that have been taken and laws enacted and so on. But the problem is the actual implementation," he said.

As if to highlight what he says, landslips and mudslides as recently as November and mid-December in corners of Indonesia and the Philippines plagued by illegal logging swept away or buried alive whole families.

Six of the world's 15 most polluted cities are in Asia, and the region generates a third of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. In Asia's developing regions, around 785 million people lack regular access to safe water, UN statistics show.

But there are pockets of improvement.

The air quality in notoriously polluted Bangkok, Dhaka, New Delhi and several Chinese cities is healthier after most of Asia, except for Indonesia, phased out lead from gasoline, said Cornie Huizenga of the Asian Development Bank's Clean Air Initiative.

Bangladesh, which is spending $30 million over two years to bring natural gas to 100 petrol stations, is replacing high-polluting two-stroke engines in its rickshaw taxis in the capital Dhaka with cleaner-burning natural gas power.

"It's an unequal picture. There are cities where the situation is getting better," said Huizenga, adding that a growing number of cities have put up air monitoring systems.

Thailand's *tuk tuk* taxis now run on liquefied petroleum gas, while buses and taxis in New Delhi and Bombay are phasing out diesel and running instead on compressed natural gas. "This is very much the story of the future," he added.

Huizenga and other environmental experts helped the Association of South East Asian Nations draw up an anti-pollution plan as rising wealth brings demands for better urban conditions after decades of squalor in some countries.

Southeast Asian environment ministers meeting in Myanmar approved a non-binding "framework" which calls on Asean to develop stronger urban anti-polluting strategies beginning with a series of workshops next year.

"Due to rapid growth, you're getting overlapping problems—water, air, land—on top of each other, making a very complex situation," said Peter Marcotullio, a researcher in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the United Nations University in Tokyo. "So part of what is being done here is to ease out some of these problems so that city managers can deal with them one at a time, as opposed to what seems to be happening is that they are all coming at them at the same time."

Fixing Asia's environmental mess—from stifling sandstorms and rapid soil erosion in China to treating sewage in Indian rivers and Southeast Asian air pollution—is turning into a billion-dollar business.

The US Department of Commerce is sending an "Environmental Technologies" trade mission to Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam next March to scout for opportunities for US companies, citing "significant" potential for US expansion. It estimates that Malaysia's "environmental" market is worth around $800 million, mostly for safe water supply and sewage treatment, and says Thailand needs to spend around $1.2-$1.5 billion on clean water and sanitation by 2020. In Vietnam, a pollution control equipment and services market was worth $450 million in 2003 alone.

Other environmental problems, however, are festering. In Indonesia, home to the world's third-largest tropical forests after Brazil and the Congo, forests have disappeared at a rate three to four times faster than those in Brazil since 1990, mostly because of logging and burning, says international environmental group Global Forest Watch.

"Every year the country is losing nearly two million hectares of forest. If this rate continues, then by 2010 most forest in Sumatra and Kalimantan will disappear," Longgena Ginting, head of local environmental group Walhi, told Reuters, referring to two of Indonesia's biggest islands.

Much of this feeds huge demand for timber in economically booming China where logging was banned after excessive tree-felling contributed to floods that killed around 4,000 people in 1998.

Chee Yoke Ling of the Third World Network, a Malaysian lobby group, said countries such as Malaysia had nice-sounding environmental laws but fell down on implementation, as damage to tropical forests in Borneo's Sarawak and Sabah states continues. "We have it but we don't enforce it," she said.

Chinese sandstorms are widely attributed to over-grazing, over-plowing and over-use of water resources.

Asean's "Framework on Environmentally Sustainable Cities" uses some European cities as a model and is partly funded with German taxpayer money through the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

"We had the same problems in Europe years ago, starting 30 years ago with completely poisoned lakes, rivers, in Germany, poisoned air," said Waldemar Mathews, managing director of the Bavarian Institute of Applied Environmental Research and Technology. "And we started with the same discussions."

Reuters

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CARGO VESSEL SINKING

Navy fuel lack blocking search

By Jofelle Tesorio
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Bad weather and fuel shortage might abort the search and rescue operations for the missing pasengers of ML Pia-ry in the waters of Palawan anytime soon.

On the sixth day of the operation, the Philippine Navy's fuel supply may run out anytime today, said Navy officers.

According to Lt. Charles Villanueva, operations officer of Naval Forces West (Navforwest), the naval station had already requested for additional fuel but it would still come from Manila. They are expecting the fuel supply to arrive on Monday.

"We will evaluate (the situation) if we could still find more survivors today and it's the higher authority who will decide what to do next. We are really running out of fuel," he said.

Storm

At the same time, according to the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (Pagasa), storm Zigzag, even if it was seen headed toward Virac, Catanduanes, was expected to cause strong winds, big waves and rough seas between Mangsee Island and Banguey Island in Malaysia where the search and rescue operation is taking place.

Villanueva said the Navy boats scouring the area for survivors were estimated to be running for more than 100 hours already, consuming precious fuel.

An hour consumes 350 liters of fuel for smaller boats like patrol gunships while the bigger ones consume 740 liters per hour. Computed at P16 per liter, the Philippine Navy had already spent so much on the operations, he said.

While it was part of their mission, Villanueva said the rescue effort depends on whether the naval station could still support longer operations because it also has other important missions.

Villanueva did not specify what these other missions are.

Meanwhile, reports that 28 survivors were found on the shores of Banguey Island turned out to be untrue.

No survivors

Villanueva said the police chief of Balabac town who coordinated with the Malaysian police reported that there were no survivors found on the island.

As of now, Navy and Coast Guard officials said there were 27 survivors accounted for. The search and rescue teams also recovered an unidentified body near the site of the sinking of the 69-ton wooden cargo vessel.

Xmas dark in Olongapo, Zambales villages

OLONGAPO CITY—Except for a few fireworks, residents here celebrated a silent and literally dark Christmas when a power outage hit several areas of the city starting Dec. 24.

Power supply in the city was cut at about 6 p.m. on Wednesday, spoiling preparations for noche buena and cutting short the residents' last-minute Christmas shopping.

The city's public utility department (PUD) was swamped with complaints from residents who expressed dismay over the power outage that occurred on Christmas Eve.

Luisito Lopez, PUD technical consultant, said a transmission failure that occurred in the PUD's substation in front of the Kale Beach caused the power outage that also hit nearby towns of Zambales.

He said a power transformer in the compound of the National Power Corp. was damaged, resulting in a sudden blackout in Olongapo City and in the towns of Subic, Castillejos, San Marcelino, San Antonio, San Narciso, San Felipe and Cabangan.

Power was restored in the eight towns of Zambales and few areas of Olongapo after 30 minutes on Wednesday, but a large portion of this city was left without electricity until Friday afternoon.

Lopez said the broken part of the transformer was not available in the city and nearby provinces. He said they needed to wait for a replacement part from Davao City. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

BANGUS PARTY

RAY ZAMBRANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Dagupan City holds its annual fiesta with street performances that featured gaily-costumed participants like these wearing masks and filling the city's streets with dances. The street party was also held to celebrate the continuing contribution to the city's economy of its most famous product, *bangus* or milkfish.

Satur accuses military of perpetrating killing

LUCENA CITY—Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo strongly denounced the killing of Laguna activist Romy Malabanan and pointed his fingers at the military as the one responsible for the continuing wave of terror against the leftist movement.

"The style of the execution was a patented operation of military intelligence operatives, just like the previous killings of leftist activists," Ocampo said in a phone interview on Thursday.

A lone gunman shot dead Malabanan, Bayan Muna secretary general in Bay, Laguna, in front of his house Tuesday morning.

Ocampo said Bayan Muna was to stage today a protest caravan from Manila up to Bay town to offer tributes to the slain activist, also the appointed executive assistant of incumbent Mayor Edwin Ramos.

He said the victim was the 35th activist slain in recent years.

He reiterated his call to President Macapagal-Arroyo, in her capacity as the military's commander-in-chief, to stop the killings he said were perpetrated by the military against activists.

"I hope Ka Romy will be the last in a diabolic scheme to prevent the victory of Bayan Muna party-list group in the next elections," he said.

He said he would file a resolution in Congress to conduct and finish the ongoing investigation of continuing harassment and execution of leftist activists.

Ocampo cited fresh reports of intimidation against his supporters in Mindoro and in some parts of Mindanao where "Red-baiting" tactics are being resorted to sully the election process.

Meanwhile, Alex Orias, chair of the Pagkakaisa't Ugnayan ng mga Magbubukid sa Laguna (Pumalag), said in a statement that Malabanan's death was definitely "politically motivated."

Orly Marcellana, secretary general of the Kalipunan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan, said Malabanan's case was the 74th killing in Southern Tagalog this year alone.

"He joins the ranks of slain peasant leader Eddie Gumanoy and human rights advocate Eden Marcellana who are now martyrs of the people," he said.

Gumanoy and Marcellana were murdered last April 21 while investigating reported cases of human rights violations in Oriental Mindoro. *Delfin Mallari Jr., Marlon Ramos and Clarice Colting, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Teachers lash at DepEd over GSIS suspension of loans

COTABATO CITY—Thousands of teachers and their sympathizers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao staged a picket outside the Office of the Regional Governor (ORG) Complex here to dramatize their complaint against the Department of Education (Dep-Ed) for its alleged failure to remit its share of contribution to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS).

The failure to remit, according to the teachers of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, has caused the GSIS here to suspend the grant of loans and other benefits.

Brahim Gulam, a Maguindanao schoolteacher and official of the Alyansa ng mga Progresibong Guro sa Maguindanao, said because of DepEd-ARMM Secretary Mahid Mutilan's failure to settle the department's unpaid premiums, the teachers suffer.

"Up to now, we have not received the traditional Christmas bonus that had been approved for release on Dec. 15," Gulam said.

Abunawas Solaiman of Shariff Aguak National High School said for nearly a year now, ARMM teachers, including in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, have been deprived of GSIS loans because of Mutilan's alleged shortcomings.

Mutilan, who is also ARMM vice governor, had asked the aggrieved teachers "to come to the office so you could be clarified."

"In the past, the GSIS suspension lasted for two to four months . . . But now, it's almost a year," said Kamil Alongan, a faculty member of Sultan Barira High School. *Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Firecracker makers injured in explosion

CEBU CITY—Three persons were injured on Christmas Day when an explosion occurred inside a firecracker factory in Purok Sunlight, Babag 2, Lapulapu City, Mactan Island, Cebu.

FO3 Rodolfo Apa of the Lapulapu City fire department, identified the casualty as Jose Dico, 38, the alleged owner of the factory; Judibert Dico, 11, and George Borcela, 18.

It was not immediately known if the two Dicos were related. But Jose suffered third degree burns in the body. Judibert suffered second degree burns. Both were confined at the Mactan Community Hospital in Lapulapu City.

Borcela suffered third degree burns and was brought to the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu City.

Apa said the explosion occurred Dec. 25 when the victims were cutting the wicks of a type of firecracker. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Xmas gives life to idle gov't property

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The erstwhile Paskuhan Village here, largely idle in the last 13 years, was not forlorn this Christmas as hundreds of families were seen flocking to the 10-hectare park to spend Christmas Day.

With many children in tow, the families were either having picnics, strolling, riding the *calesa* (horse-drawn rig), buying gift items and food or viewing the cultural exhibits of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera and Central Luzon regions.

On Thursday night, the park's eastern side was full with revelers as restaurants offered fresh seafood and regional specialties on their menus and as live bands played until midnight.

The park, now renamed "Hilaga" (North), has never been empty since it was transformed in September into a tourism and entertainment center of Central and Northern Luzon, according to Romulo de los Reyes, officer-in-charge of the regional Department of Tourism.

De los Reyes said despite the name change, the park's original theme had been retained. He said it is still the first Christmas village in Asia and the third in the world. Its roof is still crowned by a 14-foot fiberglass lantern.

The Filipino version of the nativity scene, comprised of sculpted images, remains a famous attraction of the park.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon said the park, a government asset, deserves to be revived because it is deteriorating to waste. It is one of the 30 or so property of the Philippine Tourism Authority.

The park, built in 1990, was supposed to give a year-round showcase of Filipino Christmas traditions and crafts.

Its construction, however, was hounded by controversy after the Senate questioned tourism officials for the funds used in building the Paskuhan.

Several attempts were made to revive it, the last in 1998 when it was used as the venue of the "Gardens of the World" exhibit or "Florikultura" organized by former First Lady Amelita Ramos.

Aside from providing a wholesome destination to families, Hilaga has helped create jobs. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ROUNDUP

I killed in clash

PARANG, Maguindanao—A civilian was killed while five militiamen were hurt in a clash with unidentified gunmen in Barira, Maguindanao on Saturday. Rushed to the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center were Tamano Oga and militiamen Nasser Sulayman, Kasabila Angkulin, Sainab Kamia and Otto Sarip. Police said the paramilitary men were patrolling the village of Karusuyan, Barira when they clashed with about 10 armed men. The suspects were allegedly led by one of those responsible for the massacre of five people in the nearby village of Rumirimbang, Buldon, Maguindanao in November. Senior Supt. Isnaji Bantala, police chief in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, ordered a massive manhunt against the suspects believed to be members of a gun-for-hire group or a private army. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Trader killed in holdup

BAUAN, Batangas—An owner of a money exchange shop in this town was shot and killed by holdup men inside his shop on Sunday. Edgardo Hernandez, 54, owner of Edleth Moneychanger in Barangay Poblacion 4 here, suffered a bullet wound in the neck and was killed on the spot by two unidentified armed men who forcibly entered the store. The two suspects got Hernandez's 9 mm pistol and used it against him. They took away a black shoulder bag with P280,000 in cash. The suspects also took the victim's 9 mm pistol. Bauan police found a shell of a 9 mm bullet and the gun holster at the scene of the crime.
Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Drug pusher shot

TAAL, Batangas—A suspected drug pusher who resisted arrest tried to stab a policeman but was shot in the legs by members of a team who caught four more suspected drug pushers in Barangay Mahabang Lodlod in this town Sunday. Arrested were suspected drug pushers Edsel Misal, 29, resident of Barangay Wawa Ibaba, Lemery town; Nicasio Dimaandal, 23, resident of Barangay Tierra Alta of this town; Bryan Valenzuela, 19, resident of Barangay Buli in this town, and Richard Razon, 28, resident of Barangay Ipil, also of this town. Police raided the house suspected to be the drug pushers' lair in Barangay Mahabang Lodlod and found the suspects in the act of using shabu.
Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Korean mugged

TALISAY, Batangas—A Korean who was touring the main crater of the Taal Volcano in Sitio San Isidro, Barangay Pulo in this town was mugged and injured by two armed men on Dec. 18. Park Dongshin, 45, was taken to the Mercado General Hospital after he was mugged by two armed men who grabbed his bag and shot his feet. He was later transferred to the St. Luke's Medical Center in Manila by his tour guide Danilo Aguila.
Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Dogs in war vs drugs

DUMAGUETE CITY—The city government will soon have its police-trained dogs to help in the war against drugs. Mayor Agustin Perdices said the dogs were promised to the city by Interior Secretary Joey Lina when he went with President Macapagal-Arroyo to Dumaguete last month. The dogs, he said, have been trained to sniff for drugs and bombs. But the mayor said they still have to work out some matters with the Department of Interior and Local Government because the city will have to provide a handler for the dogs. Perdices said he expects more arrests of drug users when these dogs are deployed to Dumaguete City. *Alex Pal, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Militiaman kills 2

ILOILO CITY—A drunken government militiaman killed two of his relatives and wounded two others in a mountain village in Culasi town, Antique Dec. 15. Diony Sayco shot dead his aunt Bienvenida Sayco, 53, and his cousin Analyn Sayco, 19, said Senior Insp. Agustin Huesca, Culasi police chief. Analyn's sister Cheryl, 15, and brother Jeffrey, 11, were wounded. Police said Diony had a drinking party with his relatives inside the family compound in Barangay Valderrama, Culasi. Minutes before the shooting, his uncle Robling, the father of Analyn and her siblings, admonished him for his drinking and told him to go home. Diony, 35, went home but returned with his government-issued M-1 Garand rifle. He went to Robling's house and when he did not find his uncle, he shot the victims, said Huesca.
Nestor Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau

Health a priority

DUMAGUETE CITY—Health services is the top priority of the provincial government next year. Gov. George Arnaiz said 37 to 40 percent of the province's 2004 budget worth P661 million was allocated to health. He said provincial government-run hospitals, especially the Negros Oriental Provincial Hospital (NOPH), need a bigger budget due to the number of patients seeking treatment. The NOPH has 250 beds but it is attending to at least 300 patients, he added. Arnaiz said the NOPH's budget was not even enough for medicines. *Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

58 pushers, users nabbed

CABUYAO, Laguna—Laguna police arrested 58 persons, including the most wanted drug pusher of this town and seven members of a local drug syndicate. Calabarzon police director Chief Supt. Reynaldo Varilla on Monday presented the suspects to Deputy Dir. Gen. Edgardo Aglipay who met with police and government officials in Laguna. Varilla said the suspects were arrested after he ordered 28 police anti-drug operations Saturday to Monday. He said 14 of those arrested were caught in pot sessions, while 33 were arrested in buy-bust operations. The rest had warrants of arrest. Police said the "biggest fish" was Mamerto Fariñas, 38. The operations also resulted in the arrest of seven members of the dreaded Alicbusan drug group, which operates in Laguna and nearby provinces.
Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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INQUIRER Visayas

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Edralyn L. Benedicto**

Pastor walks for children

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Iloilo City

A CUBAN-AMERICAN pastor has brought fresh hopes to poor patients of the regional hospital in Western Visayas by walking nearly 134 km to raise funds for the hospital's pediatric ward.

Rev. Daniel "Danny" Garcia's "healing walk" drew thousands of Ilonggos, who waited for him along the national highway from Estancia town to Iloilo City.

Many of them gave food and cash contributions—from coins to hundreds of pesos. One resident even gave two packs of intravenous solution.

"This is incredible and unbelievable. I have not felt this way before," said Garcia, 58, as throngs of people met him in the 11 towns of northern Iloilo that he passed.

Many of those who met him asked for his blessings and prayers to cure various illnesses.

"I waited for him for hours to pray for me," said Leticia Dazas, 72, who was among the hundreds of people who met Garcia when he reached Sara town early evening on the first day of the walk.

The rousing welcome strengthened Garcia's resolve to finish the walk, which turned out to be one of the most difficult and challenging that he has made.

"I was hurting and almost decided to quit," he said, bursting into tears when he arrived at the hospital. "This is my message to Filipinos. Don't quit, especially during the most difficult times."

Garcia was bogged down by stomachache during the first day, delaying his quest by more than four hours. He was also exhausted by praying over the thousands of people who blocked his path to ask him to pray for them.

The crowd delayed Garcia's schedule, forcing organizers of the fund-raising drive to convince Garcia to take a ride in sparsely populated areas to keep up with the schedule.

Garcia reached Iloilo City on the third day, where around 500 of his supporters walked with him to the hospital. Employees of the medical facility welcomed him.

For the children

The three-day walk, initiated by the Workers for Environment and Health (We Heal) Foundation, raised around P131,800, said cardiologist Louie Tirador, the foundation's president.

He said the amount would serve as seed fund to buy equipment or defray the freight charges for donations to the pediatric ward of the government-run Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC).

Maria Stella Paspe, chief of the hospital's pediatric department, said her unit catered to patients from all over Panay Island, but it severely lacked equipment, such as incubators and respirators that are essential in taking care of newborn babies.

The ward is also short of beds with two to three babies sharing a bed at times, she said.

Garcia said he was "saddened and angry" at what he saw in the hospital. "I have seen children dying in many hospitals because of lack of syringes and respirators and they need our attention and help," he said.

THIS pastor has been walking the streets of Iloilo (above, waving) to raise funds and awareness of children's needs in the West Visayas Medical Center, where patients at the pediatric ward share a bed (below, right). Hospital staff welcomes Garcia during his arrival in Iloilo City (below, left).
NESTOR P. BURGOS JR.

Walk for a cause

Garcia is known as the world's "Walking Man" for walking in many parts of the world to preach and draw attention to the plight of children, especially in poverty-stricken and war-torn countries.

For the last seven years, he has walked a total of 31,000 km. These include the United States, countries in Europe and the Middle East, and Australia.

In his missions, he had met with more than 500 world leaders and personalities, including Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa and former US Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

Before the fund-raising drive in Iloilo, he walked in September from Ground Zero (the bombed Twin Towers) in New York to the Walter Reed Hospital and to the Pentagon for those who died and those still suffering from the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

In September last year, Garcia walked from Manila to Santiago City in Isabela, Baguio City, and then back to Manila to raise funds for the pediatric ward of the Philippine General Hospital.

Garcia began to walk for causes at one of the most difficult times of his life.

Born to parents of Cuban descent in the Spanish Harlem in New York City, which he describes as a "rough neighborhood," Garcia grew up literally fighting racial discrimination and coping with domestic violence.

At 15, he left home to escape from the constant fighting of his parents. Two years later, he dropped out from high school and joined the US Marines.

While in the Marines, he continued his studies majoring in psychology, which he was able to use in counseling drug and alcohol abusers in the service.

Later, he worked in correctional institutions in the US and in the public relations department of Shell Oil Co.

Garcia said he had committed many mistakes in his life, including bouts with alcohol, drug abuse and womanizing.

Change

The turning point came in 1996 when Garcia's second wife divorced him after 19 years of marriage, ending a troubled and often violent relationship. He said that one day, he was "hit by the fear of God."

Devastated by the breakup, he decided to "give up everything" and heal himself by walking "like a crazy man."

He first walked from Planet Hollywood in San Francisco, California to Tijuana, Mexico. "Since then, I cannot stop walking," said Garcia.

His walks have been mainly for children because he believes many of them all over the world are neglected and abused.

Despite his advocacies, Garcia refrains from injecting politics into his cause. "I'm not judging anyone. Let's just fix them (the problems)," he said.

Garcia has found support from his Filipina wife, Rosalina Acedera, whom he married last year. He met and fell in love with Acedera in 1993 in Jordan in one of his walks.

Acedera, from Law-ang town in Northern Samar, said she was overwhelmed by Garcia's devotion to God.

Garcia said he also fell in love with the Philippines and planned to stay here with his wife in between his walks.

Impressed by the outpouring of support, the pastor now wants to walk on the other islands of the Visayas.

"I have seen poor people giving their support but I need the help of the rich people, officials in the government and big corporations," said Garcia.

Garcia said he would not stop walking until the problems he has been raising are addressed. "I'm not on a joy walk. I'm on a mission for God."

They lost their lives while saving others

By Jhunnex Napallacan and Jani Arnaiz
Maasin City

SOME of the fatalities in the landslides and floods that hit three towns on Panaon Island were killed while trying to save others.

A barangay tanod in Barangay Punta, San Francisco, Southern Leyte, went around the village to tell the residents to leave their homes shortly before the landslide hit the community on Friday night.

Rescuers later found the decomposing body of Alfredo Albino, in his 40s, who was identified through his t-shirt, with "Barangay Tanod" printed on it.

A former mayor of nearby San Ricardo town was last seen trying to rescue children from the flash flood that hit Barangay Pinut-an.

Vicente Mejia, husband of incumbent Mayor Virginia Mejia, was among the 18 people reported missing in San Ricardo.

San Ricardo and San Francisco were two of the three towns on Panaon Island that were hit by landslides and flash floods, resulting in more than 100 deaths. The other disaster-stricken town was Liloan.

San Francisco Vice Mayor Bonifacio Armaga said in an interview in Cebu City that the barangay chair of Punta, Ricky Subang, had instructed Albino to inform the residents to leave their homes when they noticed water starting to flow from the mountains.

Barangay chair

Amid the chaos following the avalanche of mud and debris, Subang was found busy bringing his family to safety so that he did not know what had happened to his barangay tanod.

They were shocked when they saw Albino's body several days later—in an advanced state of decomposition. Armaga said they believed that Albino died while trying to carry out his duty.

Albino and more than 20 others were buried in a mass grave in the public cemetery of Punta, the village worst-hit by the landslide. Seventy-one bodies had been recovered and 20 more were believed to have been buried in mud.

Former Mayor Mejia was last seen trying to rescue children from the flash flood that hit Pinut-an. Six people were killed in the flash flood while 25 others were injured.

San Ricardo parish priest Manuel Lagumbay and Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias said they received reports that the former mayor was rescued in St. Bernard town, also in Southern Leyte. But they could not check the veracity of the reports as of press time.

Ex-vice mayor

Lagumbay said Mayor Virginia Mejia told him that her husband went out of their house at about 5 p.m. on Saturday upon learning that floodwaters had swept his two vehicles.

The former vice mayor had just transferred the two vehicles to a safe area when he saw some children about to be swept by the floodwaters.

Lagumbay said Mejia went to help the children. The former mayor had not been found since.

Gov. Rosette Lerias said that while the tragedy had brought them pain, it in a way proved that the *bayanihan* spirit was still very much alive among Filipinos. This was seen in the support extended by others to the affected towns, she said.

Lerias said she was touched by the many donations and expression of support from many private individuals, institutions and officials from different government agencies.

Among those that extended help was the United States government, which sent ready-to-eat food brought in by a C-130 plane.

The US government gave P3M in financial assistance to the landslide victims.

Another C-130 plane transported food and clothes provided by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC).

The Maasin City government and the provincial government opened centers for donations and pledges to families affected by the landslides and flash floods.

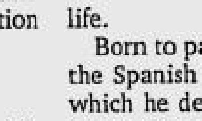
Local officials were touched when even poor families went to the donation centers at the provincial capitol and the Maasin city hall to donate canned goods and used clothing.

Several government agencies have also pledged to donate relief goods. The Philippine Coast Guard dispatched the BRP Batangas 004 to Leyte to help transport relief goods to affected areas.

"The outpouring of support is overwhelming. I have seen how government can work for the people and what we can do together," said Lerias.

US expelled Brits from Samar

VINTAGE VIEW



Rolando O. Borrinaga

WHEN the American pot calls the British kettle black, which is the fairer of the two?

After the US had usurped the Philippines towards the turn of the 20th century, they had to deal not only with the Filipino resistance but also with British companies that controlled the trading of hemp (abaca), the principal Philippine export product at the time.

Of course, the Americans publicly displayed considerable brutality in subduing the Filipinos. But they mainly whined against alleged excesses of British firms in their reports, and then tactfully dealt with British nationals in face-to-face situations.

However, in one instance, the Americans went overboard when a US military general expelled from Samar all four British agents of two trading companies—three belonging to Warner, Barnes and Co. and one to Smith, Bell and Co. The expulsion was made in mid-October 1901, during the hysteria in the aftermath of the Balangiga Massacre on Sept. 28, 1901.

Gen. Adna R. Chaffee, the American military-governor for the unorganized provinces of the Philippines, defended his subordinate's action by clarifying that the British agents committed "violation of the laws of war" by supplying the natives with funds.

But the acting British consul in Manila, named Sinclair, held the opinion that the expulsion would not have been carried out had it not been for the rebels' success in Balangiga. He surmised that the drastic methods (diplomatese for the "kill-and-burn" policy) used by US military authorities to restore their prestige in Samar rendered the presence of independent witnesses undesirable.

How was the Samar episode presented in the official reports?

James A. LeRoy, the secretary of a member of the Philippine Commission in 1901, mentioned about the US naval blockade of the hemp ports of southern Luzon and the islands of Leyte and Samar, which were being used by the Filipino resistance as centers for tax-gathering operations.

LeRoy reported that the corrupting conditions of the Filipino management of interisland commerce were due to the large trading firms with headquarters in Manila and branches throughout the archipelago.

He tactfully referred to the British trading companies as those, which "were living and directing their operations under the American flag, (yet did not) cease their connections with the Filipino government."

He also charged that the firms "purchased immunity for their operations in the provinces by acting as the Manila bankers of the insurgents, by paying taxes to the latter for their inter-island traffic, and even by direct contributions to the insurgent cause."

On his part, Sinclair sent several dispatches to the home office in London, explaining the British side of the Samar episode. He was strongly of the opinion that the charges against the four British agents originated in rice being handed to the rebels by persons (middlemen) who had dealings in hemp with the two firms involved, and who had managed to obtain permits from the US authorities to buy rice and take this item into the Samar countryside.

From information he had gathered during a trip to Samar to investigate the issue, the consul was convinced that the British firms' native "buyers" had paid blackmail to the rebels to save their lives.

However, he also emphasized that the native government in Samar was undisturbed while US military operations were in progress in Luzon. They even collected taxes and the US Customs House in Manila received their clearances of vessels.

Sinclair, therefore, could not see why the native middlemen should later be expected to submit to martyrdom out of loyalty to the US, whom they knew little or nothing about, or why the British firms employing them should be held responsible for their actions.

The British consul observed that the US military blockade of Samar was not very effective. Rice was being smuggled into the island on native boats from neighboring islands. Hemp was also exported from Samar in the same manner.

He particularly sensed a strong feeling of envy in American circles against the British firms in Samar, which practically controlled the hemp trade and which, owing to their having been established here for over 50 years, possessed the complete confidence of the natives.

Now, was the American pot fair and justified in calling the British kettle black?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FOUR DIGIT
9 2 5 4
(In exact order)

SUERTRES
4 7 3

MEGALOTTO 6/45
3 16 25 28 35 40

METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

Watch out for those Xmas lights, MMDA warns

FOR METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority and Metro Manila Disaster Coordinating Council Chair Bayani Fernando, December is just as fire prone as the month of March.

"The flurry of activities during the Christmas season cause fire incidents," Fernando told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. "It is very important for people to think of every month of the year as fire prevention month."

He reminded the public to "keep an eye" on decorations such as Christmas lights and candles. He also said that people should not forget to turn off gas burners and stoves after cooking.

He stressed that unusable and combustible items should be disposed, and "not to be kept in the house for future use."

The MMDA chair also reminded firemen to always prepare their equipment.

"(Firemen) should not say that they do not have enough facilities," Fernando said. "They should not depend on fire volunteers to do their work for them."

Fernando said the MMDA would be assisting the firemen by providing the needed equipment like manlifters and cranes. *Margaux Ortiz*

'Twas a blazing Christmas in Manila, Pasay

By Leila Salaverria and Margaux Ortiz

FIVE fires hit Manila and Pasay on Christmas Day.

At 11:25 p.m. Thursday, a five-hour blaze razed 40 houses in Pasay City, destroying P2M worth of property.

According to SFO1 Vicente Godinez, the fire started at the house of a certain Carlos Tolentino on Inocencio corner Tramo Street at 11:25 p.m.

Godinez said it took five hours for firemen to put out the fire because the streets in the area were narrow and difficult to pass through.

Six hours earlier, the shanty of Lourdes Moran along Del Pan bridge in Tondo was damaged when faulty electrical wiring sparked an eight-minute blaze.

At 2:50 p.m., an hour-long fire hit a warehouse at the corner of Paterno Street and Quezon Boulevard in Quiapo and destroyed half-a-million in property.

FO3 Jojo Magallanes said the blaze began at the third floor of the warehouse, which is used by an electric fan dealer. The warehouse, which also used to be the Life Arcade, is owned by Teofilo Villongco.

The fire in Quiapo snarled traffic for an hour as firefighters battled the flames.

More than an hour earlier, children playing with fireworks caused a 10-minute blaze that destroyed the door of a house along Soriano Street, Tondo, at 1:24 p.m.

Magallanes said the children were playing with a firecracker called a "trianggulo" when its explosion hit the door.

And at 12:43 p.m., fire hit the second floor of the house of Sisenando Bruce Lango, 57, at Bagac Street, Manugid, Tondo.

Magallanes said Lango suffered first degree burns on his forearm when he tried to save several pieces of furniture from his burning home.

At total of P3 million was destroyed.

DoH: 'Cracker victims getting younger

82 reported injured; store selling fireworks explodes in Quezon City

By Blanche Rivera, Tarra Quismundo and Edson Tandoc Jr.

METRO Manila is having a blast of the most harmful sort.

The Department of Health yesterday reported that the number of firecracker victims has surged, with at least 70 victims being admitted to hospitals around the country on Dec. 24 and 25.

A DoH official said that the victims are also getting younger.

In Quezon City, a stall selling firecrackers caught fire and exploded on Thursday, damaging nearby establishments.

As of yesterday, cases of injuries due to firecrackers, stray bullets and watusi totaled 82, with Metro Manila accounting for 30 of the new cases.

On Dec. 21, there were only five reported cases, according to the DOH.

The number of cases showed a 24 percent increase over the same period last year, when only 66 cases were recorded halfway through the DOH's Oplan Iwas Paputok campaign.

Chito Navarro, training officer at the DOH National Epidemiological Center, which keeps tab on the cases, also noted that the victims this year are younger.

Most of the victims last year were from the 11 to 19 age group, while many cases this year involved children below 10, and had a median age of 11, Navarro said.

The youngest victim so far is a 2-year-old kid. The oldest is 68 years old. Of the 82 cases, 76 were due to firecrackers, four due to stray bullets and two due to watusi.

The stray bullet injuries were recorded in Zamboanga, Cavite, Nueva Vizcaya and Iloilo. The watusi incidents were in Las Piñas and Antipolo.

The DOH, through its Oplan Iwas Paputok campaign, monitors injuries during the ten-day run-up period to New Year, with about 50 hospitals nationwide reporting their admissions to the DOH.

In 2003, there had been 503 cases of fireworks-related injuries. The figures were higher in 2001, with 594 cases.

In Quezon City, the walls of stalls turned black, while the glass windows of other establishments were shattered after a store selling firecrackers exploded at 10:20 a.m. on Christmas Day.

No one was reported injured, but damages to nearby shops, including a McDonalds branch near the corner of Road 1 and Visayas Avenue, were pegged at around P40,000.

Witnesses told investigators that the explosion was triggered by a thrown cigarette butt that landed in the pile of firecrackers on display.

Central Police District Baler substation investigators identified the shop owner as Emy Paquera, while reports from the Quezon City Fire Station said a Feliza Esbello owned the stall.

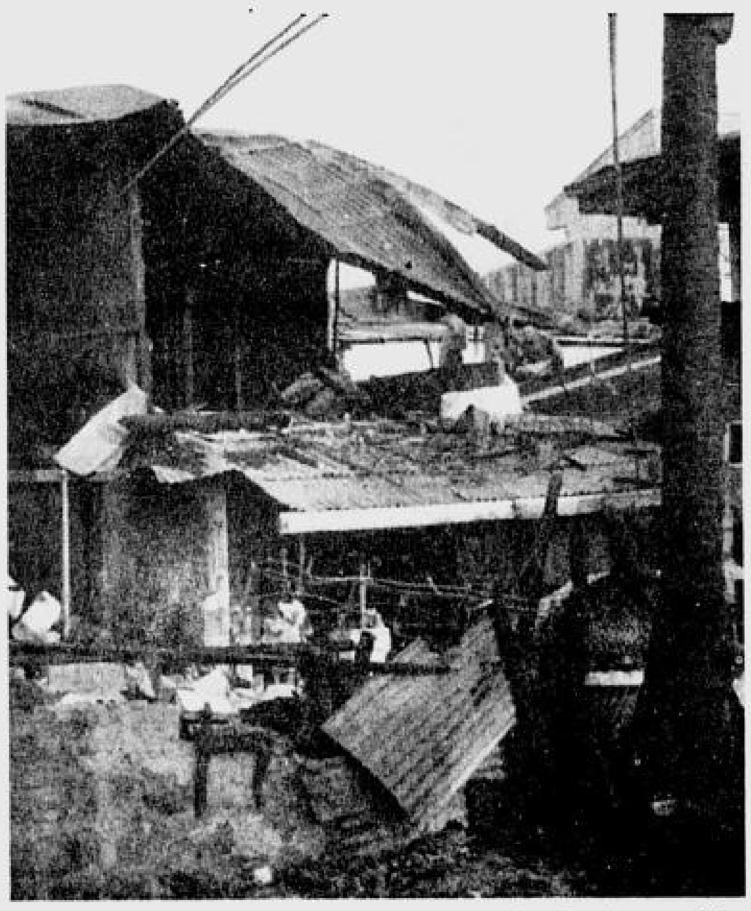
The Manila Health Department is stepping up its campaign to discourage city residents from lighting up firecrackers on New Year's Eve.

MHD chief Dr. Florante Baltazar told the INQUIRER in an interview that MHD personnel, and even sanitation inspectors, are now carrying out the campaign around the city.

"They will visit markets and other public places to advise the public about the dangers of firecrackers," Baltazar said.

To boost the campaign, visual aids would be mounted on MHD vans that have been roving around Manila since yesterday.

"Both sides of the van will bear large photos showing firecracker victims and their injuries," said Dr. Carmencita Solis, MHD Planning Division head.



AN UNTENDED candle is said to have sparked the fire that razed the houses in this community in Tramo, Pasay City on Thursday (see story at the top).

RUDY ESPERAS

Will Apple ever get to become a doctor?

By Tarra Quismundo

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Apple Sabocohan wants to become a doctor.

But from where she sits in front of the Philamlife building on United Nations Avenue in Manila, her closest encounter with the medical profession could be to watch doctors walk in and out of the Manila Doctors Hospital across the street.

Apple, her sister Mia, 9, and brother Leo, 1, are an almost daily fixture on the avenue, where they beg from passersby.

Apple began begging for money at age 7, after her father lost his job as a seaman and she had to leave school.

But the bigger tragedy for her and her family was the fire that destroyed their two-story home at the Baseco Compound at the Port Area in Manila last March.

Her parents, Romeo and Belinda, now earn a living as parking attendants on the same avenue.

In a day, the entire family earns from P500 to P600, enough for them to eat three square meals a day.

On Christmas eve, people were extra generous so they earned P800. Belinda used some of the money to cook rice cake and spaghetti, which they had for Noche Buena.

But despite having a Christmas dinner, and getting P140 of cash gifts from her godfather and aunt, Sabocohan said Christmas was not happy for her family.

"There were only a few people in our neighborhood," said Apple, who, with her parents and siblings, took a break from working on the sidewalk on Dec. 25.

It did not even matter that they had lost their house and now are forced to live in a tent. For them, Christmas was spending the day with neighbors and friends.

"Papa said that when he is able to buy some lumber, he would rebuild our shanty," the girl said.

Yesterday, Apple, Mia and Leo were back on the street begging.

The 12-year old said her parents wanted them to stop begging; but like her wish of becoming a doctor, it is something that has to remain a dream.

10 killed in Yuletide violence

THE SEASON of goodwill was over all to quickly for 10 persons who were killed in Manila, Taguig, Malabon and Valenzuela yesterday and Christmas day.

In Taguig, Glenelle Lacson, 23, of 1 Daisy St., Purok 6-C, Lower Bicutan, Taguig, and Gilbert Herrera, a helper, were found riddled with stab wounds inside their bakery at 9 a.m. yesterday.

Over at Malabon City, Alexander Bandol, 21, tried to pacify his warring neighbors in Barangay Tañong but ended up dead instead at 4 a.m. Two hours earlier, Ralph Flores, 22, of Pasig Line, Sta. Ana, Manila, was killed when rival gang members shot him with a homemade shotgun along Oro-B Street in Sta. Ana.

Prior to this at 1 a.m. in Caloong I, Valenzuela City, construction worker Edwin Acosta, 28, was sleeping in their barracks when fellow worker Joel Antonio stabbed him to death.

At five minutes after midnight, Arnel Encarnacion, 26, of Area B, Parola Compound, Binondo, Manila, was gunned down in front of his house.

On Christmas day, at 9:25 p.m., Allan Hamot, 28, of Tugatog, Malabon City was sleeping when stabbed to death.

At 7 p.m. Bryan Tambong, 26, was killed in a stabbing spree near C.P. Garcia Street, Tondo.

At about the same time, Edwin Rivera, 33, of Paltok Street, Sampaloc, was stabbed dead by two men near his house.

Early Thursday afternoon, at 2:20 p.m., a body was fished out of the Manila Bay near Pier 18, Vitas, Tondo. The 17-21-year-old man had the name "Karen Cristy Joy" on his shoulder. *Leila Salaverria, Margaux Ortiz and Edson Tandoc Jr.*

Lucky 'Robot' and doctor

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

REP. ANICETO Saludo of Southern Leyte is all over the place in tragedy-stricken areas. No, not his physical presence, but his name.

Saludo's name is written on the relief goods distributed among the tragedy victims.

What a way to campaign for one's reelection!

* * *

If you plan to send relief goods or money to the tragedy victims in Southern Leyte, be sure not to send them through Congressman Saludo.

His political leaders will surely place his name on the bags and cartons to be distributed among the tragedy victims.

Saludo ako sa tapang ng apog ni **Congressman!**

* * *

The other leg of Abu Sayyaf leader Ghalib Andang, alias Commander Robot, is in danger of being amputated due to infection, my sources at the Armed Forces Medical Center said.

If his other leg gets amputated, his guards will no longer fear his escape. Escape is impossible unless he crawls with his hands to freedom.

Many people who know that Robot raped some of his kidnap victims wish his sex organ also had an infection so it would be cut off.

* * *

What a paradox that Robot is confined in a hospital where soldiers who were wounded during firefights with him and his men in Sulu are also rehabilitating.

One soldier said that if he could have his way, he would avenge the death of his colleagues whom Robot and his men beheaded during captivity.

But the soldier's wish for revenge can never be translated into action because Robot is tightly guarded.

Brig. Gen. Efren Veran, AFP Medical Center chief, has seen to it that not even a fly can touch Robot. A fly could worsen his infection because it carries bacteria.

* * *

Military doctors at the AFP Medical Center are praiseworthy in that they handle Robot like they do soldier-patients.

To them Robot is not a captured enemy, but a patient needing their care. They are guided by the Hippocratic Oath.

The doctors are so strict they even don't allow agents from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) to interrogate him while he's under medication.

"*Mahigpit sila Mon, pati kami hindi pinapapasok kapag groggy sa gamot si Robot* (They're strict, they don't allow us inside when Robot is groggy with his medication)," said an Isafp agent.

* * *

A doctor at the Philippine Heart Center, Delfin Encarnacion III, has been accused of beating up a student doing on-the-job training at the hospital.

Francis Allen Punla, a Bachelor of Science in Respiratory Therapy student, complained Encarnacion rained him with blows to his face after he tried to prevent the doctor from beating up a female nurse.

I only have this to say to Dr. Encarnacion: You're lucky, Doc, because Punla's father has mellowed down a lot since he got out of the defunct Criminal Investigation Service (CIS). Otherwise, Doc, you're now a goner.

The elder Punla, Perry, was one of the agents at the CIS who did dirty jobs for the agency. In other words, he was ordered to "salvage" (execute) notorious criminals in his time.

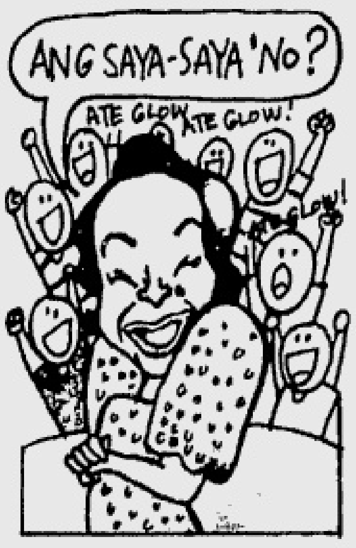
By the way, Doc, Perry, despite his age can still hit a guy between the eyes with his trusty .45-caliber pistol.

Road scheme suspended on Dec. 31

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority has announced that it will suspend the number-coding traffic scheme on Dec. 31, a non-working holiday.

"The temporary lifting of the scheme would also be in preparation for the New Year rush, when people would be trooping to the malls and commercial centers for shopping and amusement," Fernando yesterday said in a radio interview.

The MMDA had earlier announced the suspension of the number coding scheme on Jan. 1 and 2, which Malacañang declared as special non-working days. *Margaux Ortiz*



ANG SAYA-SAYA 'NO?
ATE GLOW
ATE GLOW!
GLOW!

Ate Glow, not GMA, wins crowd in Valenzuela

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

"THE PRESIDENT has arrived," said a voice on the radio. But the policemen outside the Valenzuela City Astrodome on Thursday night were wondering why no presidential security group nor a long convoy of luxury cars had entered the gate.

Inside the astrodome, Valenzuela Mayor Bobbit Carlos went up the stage and, with a smile, said: "It is my honor to introduce to you the President of the Republic of the Philippines."

The people inside the astrodome stood up and clapped their hands. A few seconds later, they started laughing.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was nowhere. But Ate Glow was there.

Ate Glow, a TV impersonator made up to look like the president, walked through the crowd, shook hands with some of the audience, went up the stage and blurted out his signature line: "*Ang saya-saya, no* (This is fun, no)?"

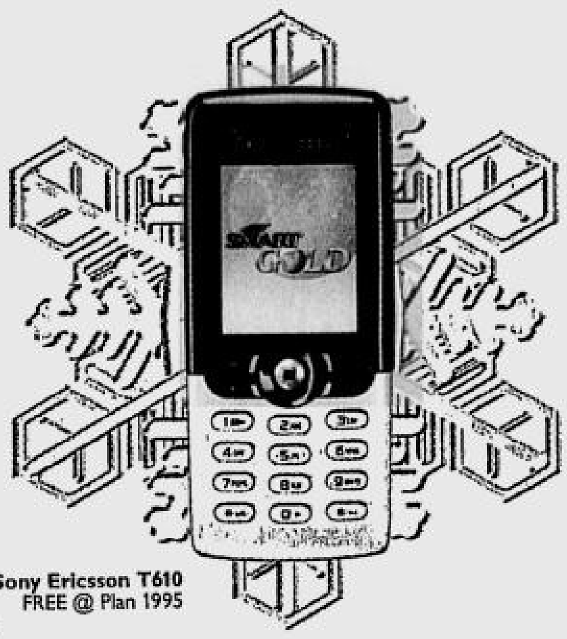
While Ms Macapagal was absent during the celebration Thursday night, another 2004 aspirant was there—Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando.

He was also welcomed with claps and cheers, though not as loud as those given to Ate Glow. One cheered "*senador, senador*," to which Fernando replied: "*Vice president po, baka magkamali kayo ha* (it is vice president, sir, hope you don't make a mistake)."

During Carlos' party held at the still unfinished Valenzuela City Astrodome in Barangay Dalandanan, Fernando tried to win the crowd's hearts by singing two songs a capella. He first sang "Sa Lilim ng Punong Mangga," unknown to most of the 2000 people inside the astrodome.

Despite the party's political flavor, Erlinda, 53, told the INQUIRER she remained undecided on who to vote for in 2004.

"*Si Ate Glow na lang ang iboboto ko* (I'll just vote for Ate Glow)," said Erlinda, who came with her daughter, grandchild and neighbors.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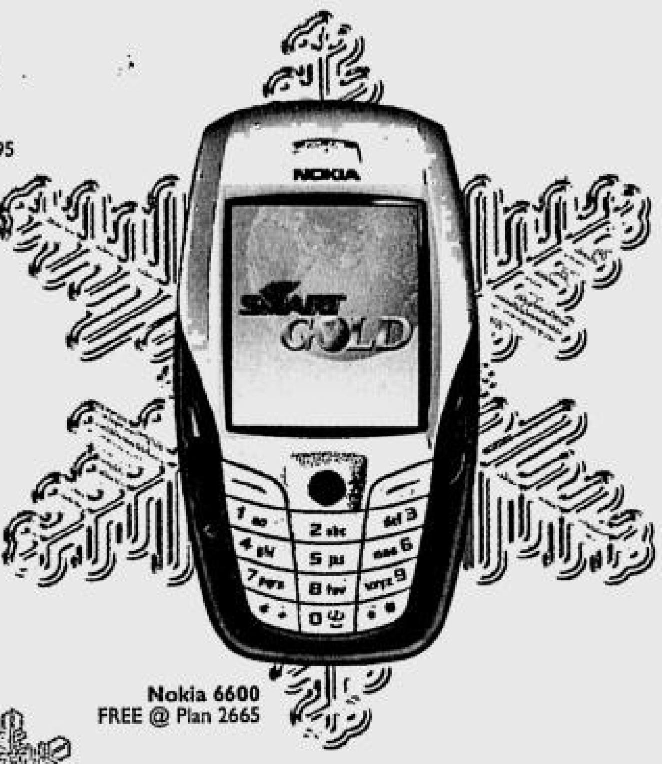
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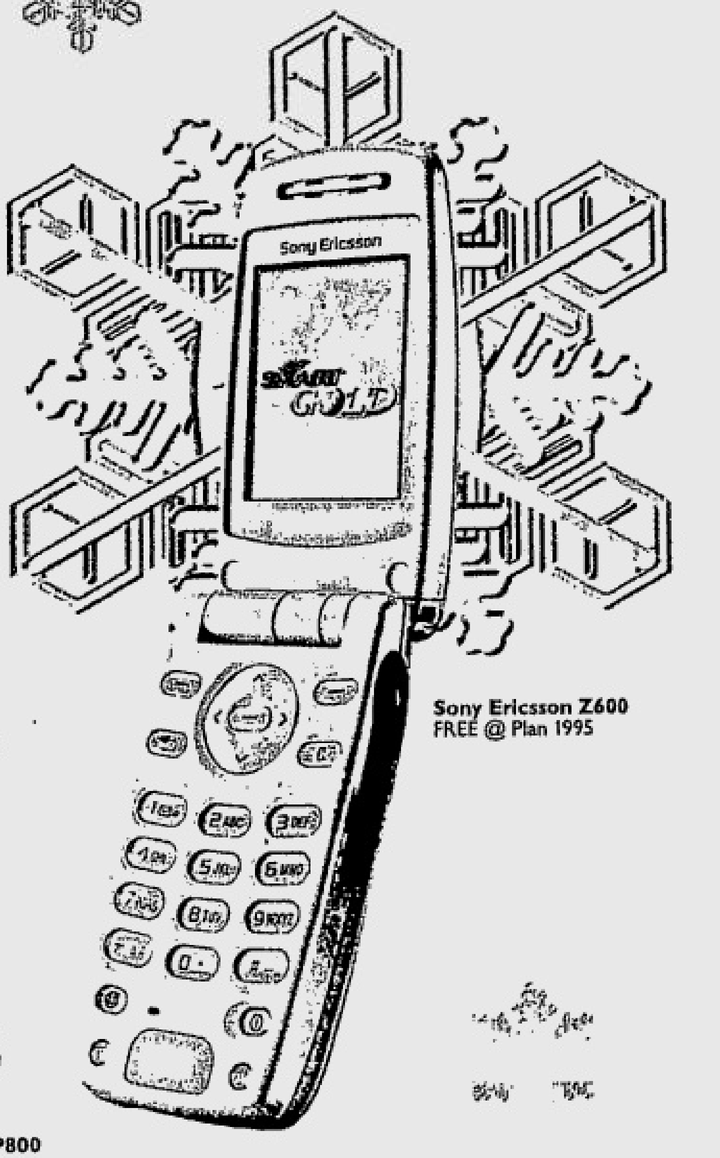
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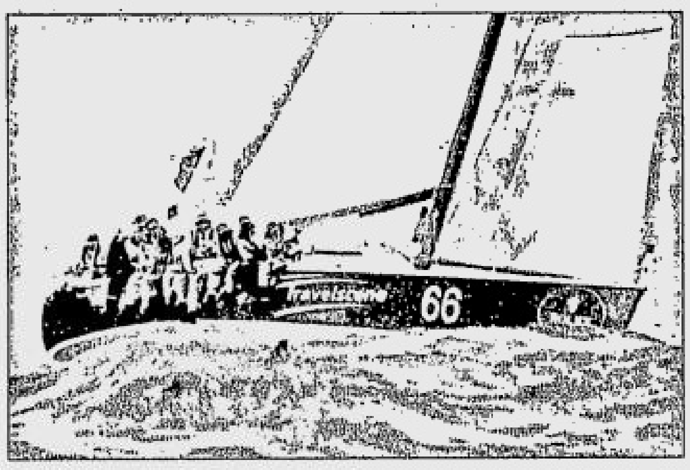

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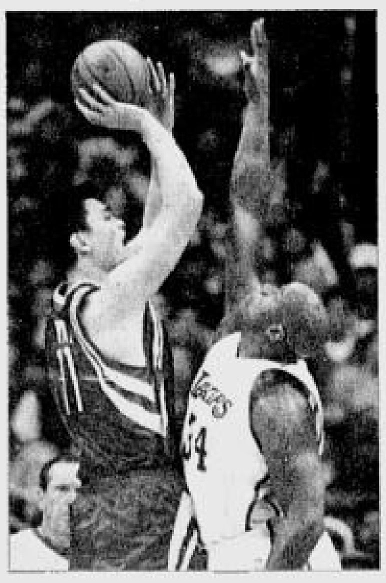

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BROKEN PROMISE

Postdated Christmas for SEAG medalists

By Recah Trinidad

HOW do you spend Christmas on credit?

A lot of Filipinos, mainly the poor daily wage-earners, certainly know how. Gritty members of this hard-up breed have been surviving on credit all these years.

The most popular escape is through the potbellied five-six usurer in the *barangay*.

But then, how do you celebrate a postdated Christmas?

To know, all you've got to do is ask our heroes in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games, the medalists who were feted at Malacañang on Dec. 19.

In that Palace affair, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo called RP winners world-class and gifted them with an incentive totalling P12 million.

First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo received resounding applause when he next promised the athletes gathered at the Heroes Hall they would get the incentives before Christmas.

The generous gesture from Malacañang was praised by practically all sectors.

The President also posed with the winners, together with Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain and Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit.

The RP winners went home feeling doubly rewarded after a long season of hard training.

They looked forward to a very merry Christmas.

But yesterday, the INQUIRER learned that the RP medalists in the Vietnam Games failed to encash their incentive checks.

The checks were released after the close of office hours on Tuesday, Dec. 23.

There was also no way the checks could've been encashed even if Dec. 24 did not happen to be a holiday.

Reason: the incentive checks were all dated Dec. 29, 2003.

Many Filipino medal winners, led by senior members of the national chess team, have reportedly complained with the Philippine Olympic Committee.

"These athletes were made to believe they would have something extra to spend for Christmas, but after waiting for most of the day, *madilim na nang makuha nila ang tseke nila*, and postdated *pa*" said a well-placed source in the POC.

MACAPAGAL

BUHAIN

The source said among those who expressed their displeasure over the late checks were chess masters Eugene Torre and Joey Antonio, both gold medal winners in the team division.

Other athletes also decried the fact that they had been used to project a very pleasant side of the Presidency.

The President had rewarded every gold medal with P100,000, silver P50,000 and bronze P20,000.

"*Kawawa naman, ginamit lang sila sa* press release (It's a pity the athletes were used for media mileage)," said a travel agent identified with parents of national swimmers.

Several athletes, failing to conceal their hurt, recalled the days when the PSC also failed to give their salaries on time.

One pundit however quipped that the incentive checks must have been intended for Christmas 2004.

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HOLIDAY HOOP CHALLENGE

Ateneo-La Salle title tiff looms

THE SAN Miguel Corp. Holiday Hoop Challenge resumes today with the holding of the semifinals in the 16-under and 13-under divisions at the La Salle Greenhills Gym in San Juan.

An Ateneo-La Salle title duel in the 13-under category looms with the Eagles scheduled to face SBPPA in the second semifinal pairing at 10:30 a.m.

The first semifinal duel at 9 a.m. is an all-La Salle clash between its A and B teams.

Harry's Up team 1 and 2, both being backed by Manila Rep. Harry Angping, try to set up a title date in the 16-under division tomorrow when they face Benedictine International School and San Beda College, respectively.

It will be Harry's Up 1 against Benedictine at 9 a.m. and Harry's Up 2 against San Beda at 10:30.

The Harry's Up teams finished the eliminations with identical 4-1 slates while San Beda topped Group A with a 5-0 slate. Benedictine is playing University of the Philippines Integrated School at press time but is expected to prevail.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain will lead guests in the finals set tomorrow when the Most Valuable Player, Most Promising Player and Mythical Five will be chosen.

Joining Buhain in giving out the awards starting at 3 p.m. are Philippine Basketball Association four-time Most Valuable Players Mon Fernandez and Alvin Patrimonio, 1992 MVP Ato Agustin and Hector Calma plus some of the members of the San Miguel All Stars.

La Salle-A totes a 4-0 card when it meets its sister team (4-1). The Eagles proudly carry a 5-0 mark when they face SBPPA (4-1).

The tournament is supported by some of SMC's major brands like Magnolia poultry and dairy products, Purefoods, Purefoods-Hormel and Monterey's meat products as well as Cali, B-Meg, and products of Philippine Beverage Partners Inc. including Magnolia fruit juices, FunChum and Vival, and those from San Miguel's flour business.

Games Today (*La Salle Greenhills gym*)
9 a.m.—Benedictine vs Harry's Up 1 (16-under) Court 1
10:30 a.m.—San Beda vs Harry's Up 2 (16-under) Court 2
9 a.m.—La Salle-A vs La Salle-B (13-under)
10:30 a.m.—Ateneo vs SBPPA (13-under)

A CLARET School cager grabs the rebound off his Lourdes School of Quezon City rival in their Hoop Challenge game recently.

Thais virtual champs

HANOI—The second Asean Para Games in Hanoi were expected to end up late on Friday with an overall victory for Thailand, after four days of competition.

At midday on Friday, disabled Thai athletes had grabbed 82 gold medals, ahead of Vietnam with 60 and Malaysia with 37. Organizers said the final events would not change the countries' placings.

The official closing ceremony is scheduled to take place on Saturday evening, at the Hanoi sports palace, local press said.

About 700 handicapped athletes from the 10 Asean countries and East Timor participated in the event, during which Vietnam paid great attention to "send a message calling on the entire community to give more attention and better care to disabled people." Participants were divided into five degrees of disability, including those who are paralyzed, wheelchair-bound, visually impaired, suffering cerebral palsy or are mentally-retarded.

Medals were distributed in five sports—track-and-field, swimming, weightlifting, badminton and table-tennis.

Despite humid and cold weather, "a lot of people have come to the stadiums and the competition halls to support the disadvantaged athletes," National Sports Committee vice-chairman Nguyen Trong Hy said. *AFP*

Travelscene
66
ROLEX

DEFENDING champion Quest, skippered by Bob Steel, enters the Tasman Sea at the start of the 59th Sydney to Hobart race. AFP

Small yachts tow super maxis

SYDNEY—A handful of smaller yachts took a surprise early lead over heavily favored super maxis Skandia and Zana shortly after the start of the 59th Sydney-Hobart race on Friday.

Australian yachts Ichi Ban, Yendys and Grundig held a narrow lead over the rest of the 57-strong fleet about five hours after the start as they hugged the coast after leaving Sydney Harbor.

The New South Wales 52-footer (15-meter) Ichi Ban and Yendys and Grundig were taking the straightest and most direct course for the 630 nautical mile race.

Australia's Skandia and New Zealand rival Zana surrendered their early leads when they headed further out into the Tasman Sea in search of stronger winds and following currents.

The two new state-of-the-art 30-meter yachts did not immediately find the stronger winds but were still expected to reclaim the lead within hours as the fleet sailed into southeasterly headwinds down Australia's east coast.

The biggest boats ever to compete in the bluewater classic, Skandia and Zana started conservatively in overcast conditions and moderate southeasterly winds at the beginning of what was likely to be an intense tactical duel.

Melbourne property developer Grant Wharington's blue-hulled Skandia sliced its way out of Sydney Harbor ahead of Zana and the fleet of local and international yachts.

But the New Zealand yacht overtook Skandia about three hours after the 1 p.m. (0200 GMT) start and built a lead of between eight and 10 boat lengths when Wharington's boat lost time as its crew changed a headsail.

"We had to make a sail change that cost us and the breeze is a bit further right than we were expecting," Skandia navigator Will Oxley told race officials.

"It's going to be a long, tactical boat race." *Reuters*

Active chess tourney set today at UB

PLAYERS coming from Metro Manila and lowland provinces will have to brave the cold weather of Baguio to show their wares today in an Active Chess open tournament at the University of Baguio's Dapayan Hall.

Four national masters and Baguio chess standouts are among the early entries for the two-day tournament which stakes a guaranteed cash prize of P10,000 plus trophies and chess books for the top finishers.

Lawyer Jose Molintas, a well-known human rights crusader in the city, sweetened the pot by providing separate cash prizes for the top non-master and top Kiddie (under 14 years old) performers.

NMs Samuel Estimo, Roberto Suelo Jr., Gary Villanueva and Dante Zuñiga are the early favorites to win the tournament.

Baguio players

Giving the masters a run for their money are Baguio players Alejandro Orpilla Jr., Dean Joseph Jularbal, Su-od Mamailao, Domitilo Pineda Jr, Rex Ami, Joseph Codlaman, Noel Pinic, Danilo Diaz, brothers Oscar and Rolly Guazon, Mike Bravo, Redentor Gorospe and Gerry Evangelista.

Also joining the fray are the young Ducusin brothers, Roosevelt, 13, and Roosenicole, 12, of La Union; Reymino Sison, 12, of Benguet; and CPA-lawyer Achmad Tomambiling of Marawi City.

The event is organized by engineer Alfonso Rulloda ably assisted by Jose "Joe Rivers" Rivero, coach of the late international master Andronico Yap. City councilor Raffy Panagan, the Active Chess Center of Asia (ACCA) and Belgosa Media Systems Inc. are among the supporters of the event.

Registration is being accepted at the Mido Inn along Session Road in Baguio City. Entry fee is P200. For inquiries call or text 09209034864.

Police break up football brawl

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Police were called onto the field to separate collegiate American football players after a post-game Christmas brawl here Thursday after the conclusion of the Hawaii Bowl.

The University of Hawaii defeated the University of Houston, 54-48, in triple overtime to capture the game, which concluded with a failed fourth-down play by Houston that gave the hosts the victory.

Several players from opposing teams began a scuffle near the middle of the field. As coaches tried to restore order, another melee broke out in a punch-out that saw both teams gather and trade taunts before cooler heads prevailed.

Houston had rallied with a touchdown in the final seconds to level the game and force overtime. Hawaii missed a game-clinching field goal in the final seconds to set up the last-chance opportunity. *AFP*

Asian Cup draw Jan. 15 in Chongqing

KUALA LUMPUR—The draw for the 2004 Asian Cup finals will be made on Jan. 15 in Chongqing City in southwest China, the Asian Football Confederation said on its website.

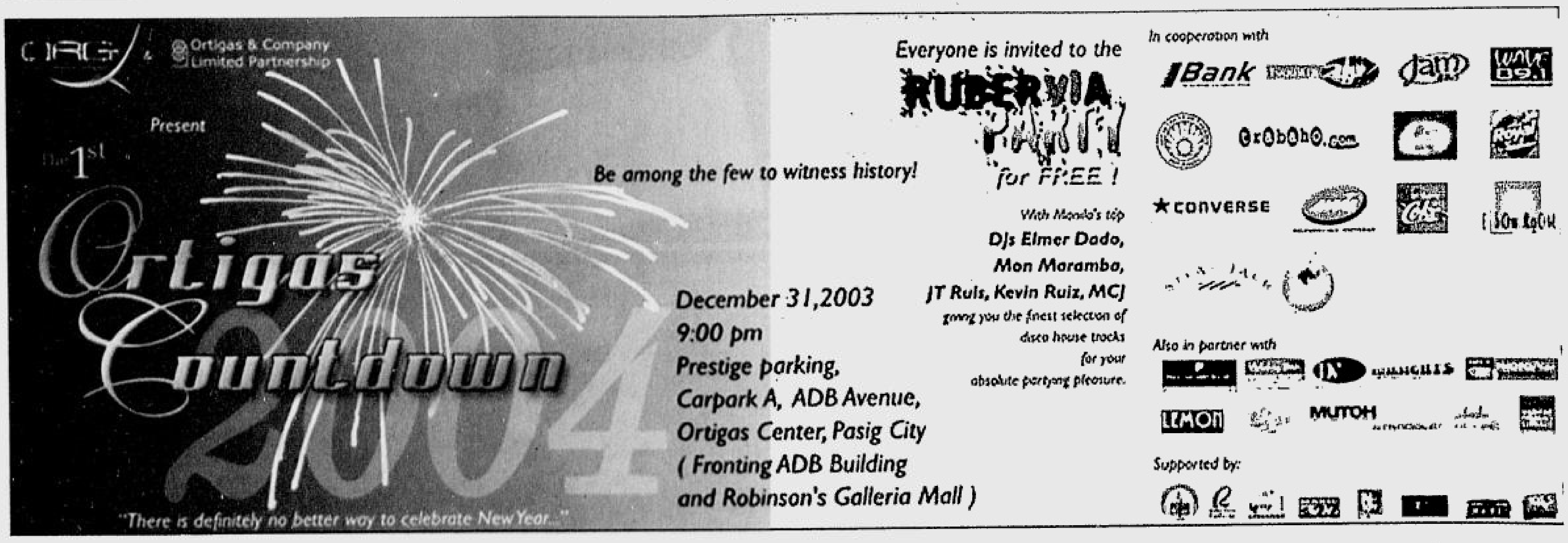
A total of 16 teams will enter the draw for the finals which will be played in China for the first time from July 17 to Aug. 7.

Host China and defending champion Japan will be joined in the hat by 14 qualifiers—Uzbekistan, Thailand, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Jordan, Iran, Oman, South Korea, Iraq, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Turkmenistan.

The 16 teams will be divided into four groups of four teams with the seedings announced at a later date, the AFC said.

Chongqing is one of the four host cities for the Asian Cup finals, along with Chengdu, Jinan and Beijing. *AFP*

WILD LIFE GOLF
A GIRAFFE watches players go about their game on the fairway of the 5th hole on the Hans Merensky Golf Course in Phalaborwa. AP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6-FOOT-8 LIMIT

Taller, bigger imports for Fiesta Conference

By June Navarro

IMPORTS will be bigger and taller when they reinforce the 10 local teams in the foreign-spiced Philippine Basketball Association Fiesta Conference in February next year.

The PBA has set a 6-foot-8 height limit for reinforcements to boost the chances of the locals against two crack foreign squads seeing action starting in the quarterfinals of the transition tournament, which serves as appetizer to the opening of the 2004 PBA season in October.

"Aside from providing excitement in the games, the imports will boost the stock of the local teams against the foreign squads," said PBA Commissioner Noli Eala.

Eala said the league has sent out invitations to the Japan professional league, the National Basketball League of Australia and the Angolan national team.

Eala said the PBA is also interested in Lebanon's national squad and one of the top teams in South Korea.

"We will make sure the foreign teams that will come here will make a serious run at the Fiesta Cup," said Eala.

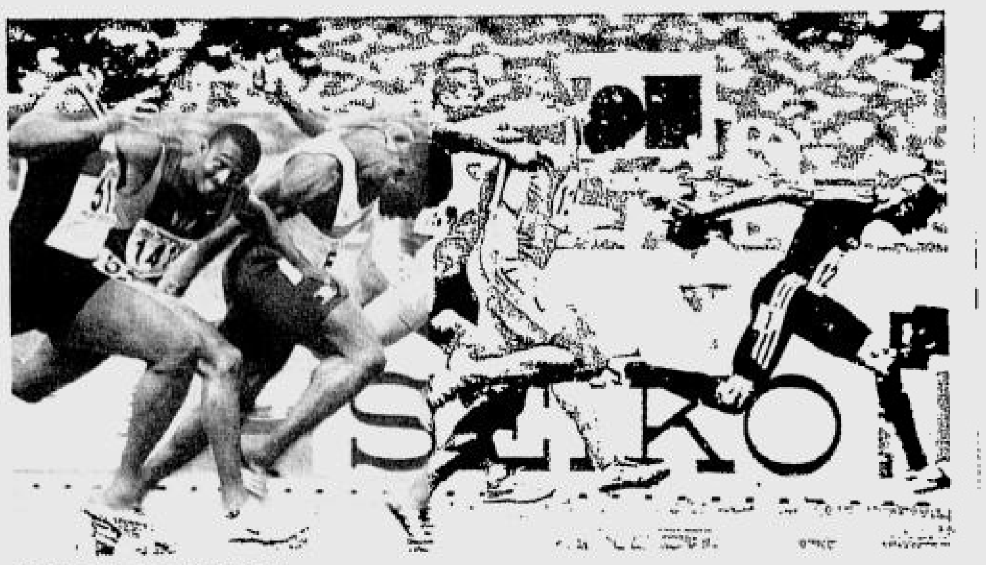
The 10 teams play at least 18 elimination round games with the top two finishers automatically getting quarterfinal berths. The No. 3 and No. 4 teams will get twice-to-beat incentives when they face the 10th-ranked and ninth-rated squad, respectively, in head-to-head matches to decide two other quarterfinal slots.

The last two qualifying slots will be decided in winner-take-all matches pitting No. 5 against No. 8 and No. 6 against No. 7.

EALA

Divided into two brackets, the six qualifiers will have a foreign team each in their division as they mix it up in a single-round quarterfinal stint.

The top two squads of each bracket will clash in a best-of-three semifinal showdown with the survivors engaging in a best-of-five title series.



WORLD ATHLETICS
Kim Collins of St. Kitts and Nevis (right) crosses the finish line to win the Men's 100-meter final at the World Athletics Championships, at the Stade de France in Saint Denis, north of Paris. AP

Former RP champs face separate rivals

RANDY Mangubat and Roy Doliguez, two former RP boxing champions, try to end the year with a bang of sorts when they face separate foes today at San Antonio Barangay Hall in Parañaque City.

The two are featured in Gabiel "Bebot" Elorde's free-to-the-public Christmas boxing show with support from former Parañaque City Mayor Pablo Olivarez Sr.

Mangubat battles Flash Simbajon, his two-time victim, in a 115-pound bout scheduled for 10 rounds.

Doliguez stakes his WBO No. 12 super-flyweight ranking against little-known Danny Peña in a 112-lb fight also slated for 10 rounds.

Mangubat, pride of Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte, is coming off three successive losses. He lost to Japan's Masaki

Kawabata last February, failed in a rematch against WBC flyweight champ Pongsaklek Wonjongkam in Songkla, Thailand, in June before Diosdado Gabi took his WBC International 112-lb belt in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato, last Nov. 9.

Doliguez was the former owner of World Boxing Organization (WBO) Asia Pacific light-flyweight title until he moved up in weight and lost via third-round stoppage against WBO super-flyweight champ Fernando Montiel in January in Los Mochis, Mexico.

Rey Danseco, Contributor

Lunas title defense on IBC 13

THE SUCCESSFUL Pan Asia Boxing Association (Paba) flyweight title defense of reigning champion Rolly Lunas versus Thai champion Phises Vor Surapol will be shown tomorrow starting at 4 p.m. on IBC Channel 13.

The 12-round title fight, dubbed "Bakbakan sa Bataan III" and promoted by LS International Promotions, ended in a 6th round knockout win for Lunas which was held last Dec. 19 at the People's Gym in Balanga, Bataan.

With the win, Lunas is expected to barge into the top ten ratings of the WBA ratings where he is currently No. 14.

Also to be shown is another Philippine lightweight championship between defending champion Fernando Montilla and Larry Pelonia.

"Bakbakan sa Bataan III" was supported by the local government of Bataan headed by Gov. Ding Roman as well as major sponsors San Miguel Beer, Petron, Herma Shipyard Inc., United Auctioneers, Genesis Transport, New Kamameshi House, Bahay ni Juan and Parañaque Auto Sales.

SPORTSWATCH

Athletes F4 guests

NATIONAL athletes were able to watch the most awaited F4 concert at the Philsports Multipurpose Arena yesterday following an agreement between the Philippine Sports Commission and Dai Bay Entertainment making the athletes among the special guests of the famous Taiwanese boy band. The concert, the first ever to be held in the country featuring all four members of F4, which made the television series Meteor Garden a by-word not only in the Philippines but the whole of Asia and beyond, was moved to the Philsports Arena from The Fort, its original venue. PSC chairman Eric Buhain said:,"The concert is our humble gift to all of you. Please accept our congratulations for a job well done for a fruitful year for Philippine sports." Philsports administrator Ramon Suzara assured a party atmosphere for the athletes, who were feted by members of the F4 with their famous love songs and dance tunes. Two other concerts, featuring two halves of the Taiwanese group, were already held in Manila early this year. Both were sold-out concerts despite the high prices of tickets.

Noche Buena derby

THE LAST major derby title for 2003 is at stake today in Roligon Mega Cockpit's "Nocha Buena 5-Cock Derby," which will start at 5 p.m. with 75 fights on tap. The finals is on Monday. Hosting the event is promoter Rolly Ligon, who put up a guaranteed prize of P750,000, including the bonus prizes and Christmas gifts to all handlers. Five of ten champions in the recent 273—entry "Apordabol Derby" will banner today's participants. They are Boy Marzo of Parañaque, Iking Araneta, tabloid executive Rey Briones, Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola of Bicol. Meanwhile, Roligon's "14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby," slated on Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12, is now keenly awaited by cockers and breeders because of the staggering prize at stake. Ligon announced that the guaranteed prize is P3.6 million as indicated in derby invitations. Entry fee is P11,000. For inquiries, contact 833-2275 and 833-1638.

Las Piñas 3-cocker

FIERCE cockfighting action is expected at the fully-air conditioned Las Piñas Cockpit tonight as the special 3-cock derby gets underway at 7. A cash prize of P250,000 is at stake in this event, according to host Eddie Alejandro who will be assisted by Councilor Henry Median. Participants are requested to submit their entries until 2 p.m. today. For details, call 873-1040. Meanwhile, LPC's big opener for 2004, the "Grand Opening 4-Cock Derby" is set on Jan. 3. A cash prize of P500,000 is for grabs while entry fee is P11,000. The champions will get two refrigerators as bonus. Part of the derby's proceeds will be donated to Las Piñas City's Clean and Green projects according to Mayor Nene Aguilar who is spearheading the benefit derby.

Referee's mom dies

Gervacia "Basyang" Valenzuela, mother of international basketball referee Levy Valenzuela, died of natural causes on Dec. 23. She was 94 years old. She is survived by her children Sonia Cabrera, Sandra Peñalosa, Romeo, Titos and Levy, FIBA international referee. She was laid to rest yesterday at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque.

2 RP Youth chessers grab golds in Brunei

BRENA MAE Membrere won the 8-under individual gold and boosted her partnership with Kyla Joy Camacho to the team title yesterday in the 4th ASEAN Age Group Chess Championships at the Orchid Garden Hotel in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darusallam.

Membrere of Aringay, La Union, handed Danielle Ho En Hui of Singapore her first loss to grab the individual gold. On the other hand Camacho of Caba, La Union drew with Singaporean Abigail Koh and pocketed the bronze.

With a combined output of 1.5 points in their last games, the Filipinas edged the Singaporeans, 10.5- 9.5, to snatch the team gold.

Defending girls' under-10 champion Chardine Cheradee Camacho of Caba, La Union outplayed Myat Thiri Aung Kyaw of Myanmar while Jan Jodilyn Pascua Fronda of Muntinlupa City downed Alia Amin Azwa Bakri of Malaysia to win individual silver medals while giving their team a bronze.

Franz Robert Grafil of Bulacan eked out a win over Gian Gitta Hadi Soebroto of Indonesia to carry his partnership with Marc Christian Nazario and Antoni Angelo Seloterio, both of Quezon City, to a bronze in the 10-under group.

The overnight preparations by the Brena Mae and Kyla Joy in collaboration with their parents, Bernie Membrere and brothers, Conrado and Emmanuel Camacho, paid off handsomely.

The outstanding performance of the two girls underscored the resurgence of chess in La Union through Gov. Victor F. Ortega.

The other members of the team performed well but fell short of a medal. Leo Daylo, Jr. of Quezon City scored 4 points in the under-14 category; Kenn Rienzi Camacho of Caba, La Union tallied 5 points and Eric Glenn Acosta of Baguio City had 4.5 points in the under 12 group.

Delegation head Joseph A. Dumuk of San Fernando City said being away from his family on Christmas Day was worth it with the 2 golds, 2 silvers and 3 bronzes won by the lean RP team of 4 girls and 6 boys. *NM Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

UEFA CHAMPS
AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini holds the trophy aloft after his team won the UEFA Champions League final between Juventus and AC Milan at Old Trafford, Manchester, England. AP

Checkmate semis today

THE SEMIFINAL round for the selection of the members of 2004 US-bound Milo Checkmate team reels off at 9 a.m. today, Dec. 27, at the 4th Flr. of J&F Divino Bldg. located at 967 Aurora Blvd. near LRT 2 Anonas Station in Quezon City.

Nineteen checkmate kids who qualified in the three series of eliminations held in Manila, Region 1 and 3, will vie for the 12 semifinal slots going into the final round. They are as follows:

Under 8—Malcolm Kwok, Aldous Roy Coronel, Christian Anthony Flores, Jerome Corpuz, Patrick Dulay and Brena Mae Membrere;

Under 10—Wayne Coherco, Antoni Angelo Seloterio, Christy Lamiel Bernales and Jan Nigel Galan;

Under 12—Carlo Pua, Mark Lazaro, Ace Ampalayo, Whiz Noche and Dominique Layugan.

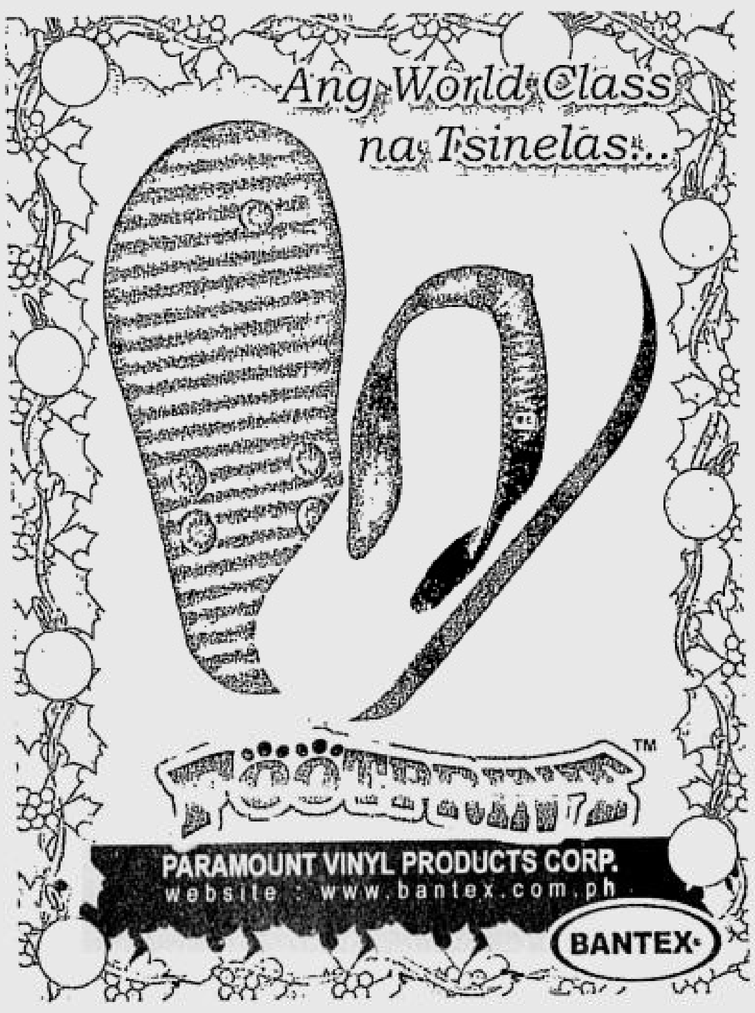
They will play in a single Round Robin system in their respective age-group. The top three finishers in each section will advance to the finals.

Quitara, Mamawal advance

CAVITE'S Lextar Quitara ousted Justine Concepcion, 6-3, 6-2, and Kevin Mamawal edged Christian Asiao, 6-4, 7-5, to lead the unheralded netters into the next round of the unisex 10-under division at the start of the Milo Junior Tennis Cup yesterday at the Ynares Sports Center claycourts in Pasig City.

Quitara and Mamawal advanced with Clarisse Patrimonio, a 6-2, 6-2 winner over Patricia Orteza; Jose Lorenzo Ferrer, who blanked Melissa Lansangan, 6-0, 6-0; Kim Polero, who won over Joachim Samson, 6-0, 6-1, and Enrique Ferrer, who nipped Gabriel Ferrer, 6-0, 7-6.

Ralph Vincent Sobrevega of Iloilo blanked Czarina Samson, 6-0, 6-0, in the year-ender Milo netfest organized by the Children's Tennis Workshop and supported by Wilson balls. Adidas and NBN-4 Sunday TV show Sports Kids with Philta sanction.



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T-Mac sparks Magic victory

ORLANDO, Florida—Tracy McGrady scored 41 points and gave star rookie LeBron James headaches here Thursday, leading Orlando past Cleveland, 113-101, in a National Basketball Association Christmas special.

McGrady, who scored 46 points on Christmas in 2002 to lead Orlando past Detroit, sparked the Magic with his scoring as well as assists, stunning "King James in his first head-to-head showdown with "T-Mac". "He's an All-Star," James said. "He's a future Hall of Famer. Guys like him you cannot stop, you can only hope to contain him." McGrady set up three of Juwan Howard's four overtime baskets and took James out of his game after hitting him in the face on a drive to the basket late in regulation.

"I got hit in the eye," James said. "I just tried to maintain my focus but I got a headache. I knew my teammates needed me out there on the court. I just tried to do the best I could." James contributed 34 points and six assists, but was 0-for-4 from the floor with a turnover in overtime.

"We weren't going to win if he's not himself," Cavaliers coach Paul Silas said. "He was until that blow. If he's not himself, it's difficult for us."

Unbelievable

In regulation, James was 13-of-24 from the field and had three of his six assists during an 11-2 run that helped force overtime.

"He's unbelievable," McGrady said. "If he continues to work hard and stay hungry, it could be ugly. It's scary how good he realy could be." Magic coach Johnny Davis knew McGrady needed his teammates as well. Howard, who scored 19 points, stepped up by scoring Orlando's first eight points in overtime, with three of the baskets coming off McGrady assists.

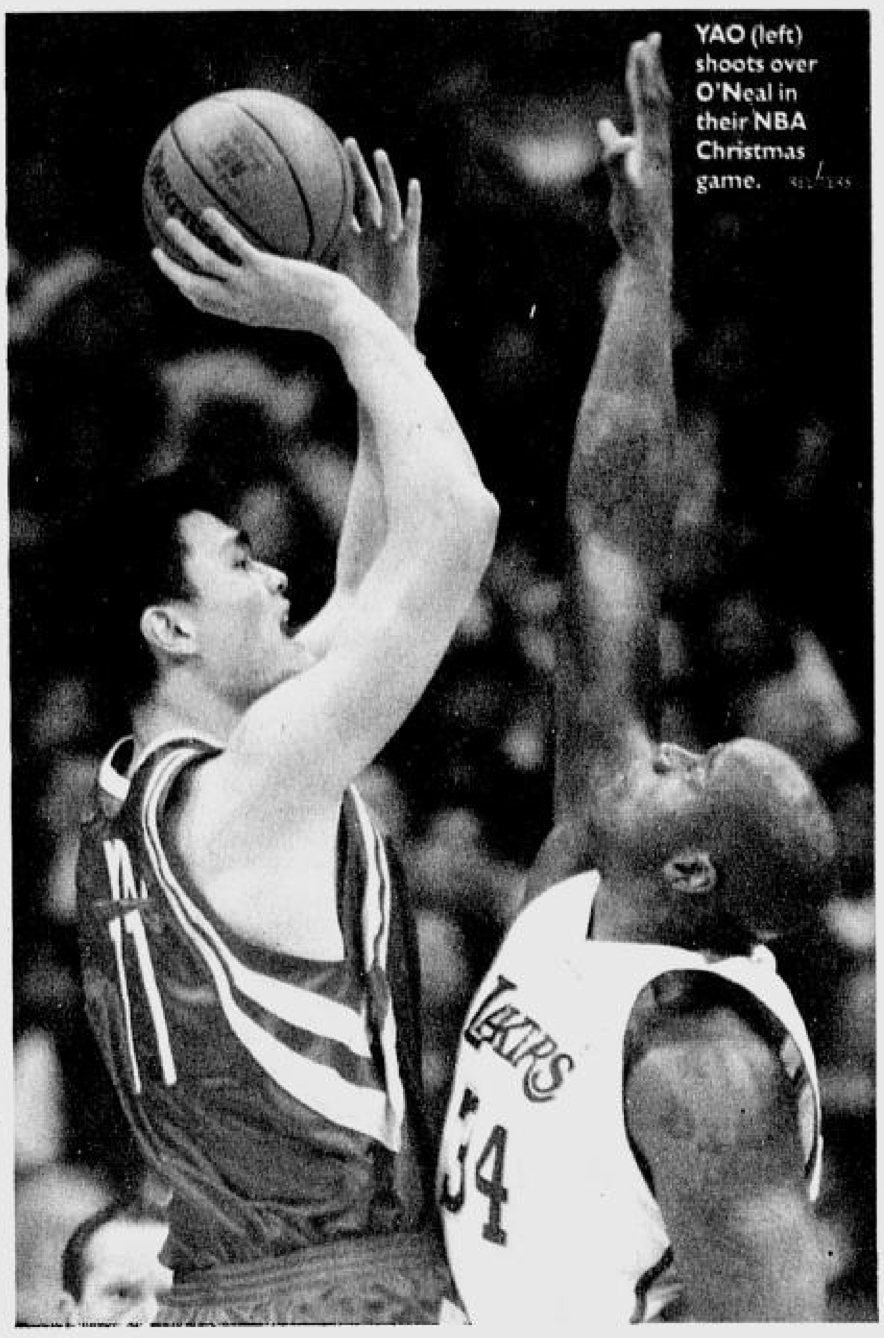
"I just said to myself, 'I'm going to get the ball and I know I'm going to be aggressive, just put the ball in my hands,'" said Howard.

McGrady set up a pair of jumpers by Howard, who made it 101-97 with 3:56 to play. Howard added a one-hander in the lane before converting another feed from McGrady for a 105-101 edge with 2:12 remaining.

In 50 minutes, McGrady went 15-of-29 from the field and grabbed eight rebounds. McGrady, the NBA's third-leading scorer, also had 11 assists.

"He's making contributions that other players are benefiting from and it's really helped our team," Davis said. "Case in point—down the stretch in overtime, he found Juwan Howard three times for buckets just when we needed them." McGrady put away the game with a pair of 3-pointers—a fadeaway in front of Cavaliers coach Paul Silas for a 108-101 cushion with 65 seconds left and another with 5.1 seconds remaining to finish the scoring.

James also received his share of praise, especially as an 18-year-old who was in high school at this time last year. At one point, he had McGrady smiling and shaking his head after a high-arcing jumper early in the fourth quarter. *AFP*



YAO (left) shoots over O'Neal in their NBA Christmas game. REUTERS

Yao gets last laugh on O'Neal

LOS ANGELES—Shaquille O'Neal outscored and outrebounded Yao Ming in their individual matchup, but the Chinese star had the last laugh on O'Neal as the Houston Rockets beat the Los Angeles Lakers, 99-87, here Thursday.

The National Basketball Association's featured Christmas showdown saw the Lakers' league-best record fall to 20-7, level with Sacramento atop the Pacific Division.

The Lakers have lost 4-of-6 following a 10-game win streak. The defeat was only their second at home in the past 10 months.

"I can't really put my finger on it yet," O'Neal said when asked for reasons for the Lakers' slide. "We have to go back to practice, suck it up and try to get back on track."

O'Neal finished with better numbers in the battle of the NBA's top centers, scoring 22 points with 12-of-18 shooting from the freethrow line and 10 rebounds. But "Shaq" had only four points in the fourth quarter.

"I would like to get the ball in position where I can do something," O'Neal lamented.

Yao finished with 18 points on 8-of-14 shooting and eight rebounds. He spent much of the game defending opponents other than O'Neal.

Yao was whistled for his fifth foul and spent the final nine minutes and 26 seconds on the bench as the Rockets outscored the Lakers 23-10 the rest of the way.

The Rockets' defense, ranked third in the NBA behind Indiana and reigning champion San Antonio, allowed just six baskets in the fourth quarter.

"We're a pretty good defensive team," Houston coach Jeff Van Gundy said. "We're locked in pretty well. We're going to be hard to beat when we don't let them get their first option on us." *AFP*

Nowitzki pushes Mavs past Kings

SACRAMENTO, California—Germany's Dirk Nowitzki scored 22 of his 31 points in the second half and the Dallas Mavericks rallied from a 16-point halftime deficit to defeat Sacramento, 111-103, here Thursday.

The National Basketball Association holiday matchup gave Mavericks coach Don Nelson the Christmas gift he was seeking. Dallas made 13-of-29 three-pointers after averaging only six three-pointers and 32 percent shooting beyond the arc.

"That's something we haven't done," Nelson said. "I assumed that we were going to be good in that area and we're one of the worst three-point-shooting teams in the league.

"I had visions of us making that shot and extending defenses. But it hasn't happened to us very often this year." The Mavericks misfired on 8-of-11 three-point attempts in the first half and shoot just 40 percent overall en route to a 60-44 halftime deficit.

But the Mavericks moved the ball better in the second half, which began with a 19-4 Dallas run, Antawn Jamison's jumper pulling the visitors within 64-63 to play after 4:41.

"It was like two different games," Nelson said. "Our offense just wasn't working, so we junked the whole thing and just went to passing. We just wanted to get ball movement and player movement." Nowitzki exploited mismatches due to the absence of suspended Serbian Peja Stojakovic and injured Chris Webber to get to the freethrow line, where he made all 10 of his attempts in the fourth quarter.

"We did a lot of motion," Nowitzki said. "It was fun. We all shared the ball, driving and kicking. That's our type of basketball." In a season-high 47 minutes, Nowitzki bounced back from Tuesday's six-point outing at Portland, making 9-of-22 shots, 3-of-6 from beyond the arc. He scored 12 points in the fourth quarter.

"He was great," Canadian guard Steve Nash said of his teammate. "Obviously, not only did he score the ball, he got to the line, got the rebounds, made some great passes and had no turnovers. *AFP*

Bryant distracted, scared amid sex assault charges

DENVER—Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant said in a televised interview that he sometimes becomes distracted or scared as he fights a felony sexual assault charge.

"You're just ... living in a nightmare and just can't really wake up out of it," Bryant said in the interview, broadcast Thursday on television network ABC at halftime of the Houston Rockets-Lakers game. Houston won, 99-87.

Bryant, 25, is charged with attacking a 19-year-old employee at a Colorado resort in June. He has said the two had consensual sex.

Asked if he has trouble keeping his mind on basketball during games, Bryant said: "Sometimes it wanders and I have to try to bring myself back to center. It's human nature, I guess."

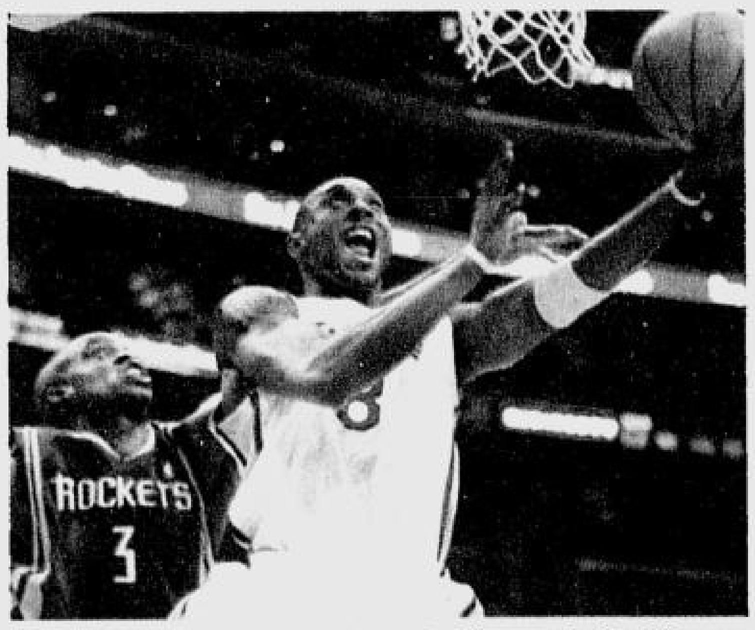
He said he is sometimes "a little bit" scared.

"If you can't control, you just kind of have to let it go. And at times that can be extremely difficult but, you know, you do it," he said.

Despite the distractions, Bryant scored the winning basket as time ran out in a Dec. 19 game against the Denver Nuggets in Los Angeles after missing the first quarter to attend a court hearing in Eagle.

Bryant is scheduled to return to Eagle for another hearing Jan. 23.

He faces four years to life in prison or 20 years to life on probation if convicted. *AP*



BRYANT (right) drives for a basket against Houston Rockets' Steve Francis on Thursday. REUTERS

The lady with three bikes

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

LIKE timepieces, no two athletes are alike. Every athlete has his/her own strength, weakness. Michael Jordan's strength was his creativity, his weakness the sky hook, which was Kareem Abdul Jabbar's cup of tea.

Also, like timepieces, no two families are alike. Every family has its own problem, joy. The problem of GMA's family now is FPJ; its present joy is Mikaela, the first grandchild of the First Family.

Nothing is perfect in this world because, to state that tired line again, this world is imperfect. Not even a guy named Perfecto is perfect. He is perfect but only in name.

No matter how beautiful one views the world, the truth is we live in an imperfect world. It becomes perfect only because we view it to be perfect, or believe it to be perfect. Viewing is one thing, believing is another. We can view the world as without a flaw. Believing it as really flawless is like believing there is no such thing as white gold.

I met a Chinese a while back. She was pretty, willowy' and wispy and very much single. An only child (of course, because it is illegal to have more than one child in China), she lives alone in a flat on the fifth floor of a condominium in downtown Beijing.

"I was born and raised in Szechuan," she tells me. "I came to Beijing to try to get a share of the big city's good life."

She swears she's had the good life.

"But I miss my land of birth," she says. "The food there, the best. The food in Beijing, very bland and dry."

What she treasures most, she says, was working as an English interpreter during the Miss World pageant in China.

"They were all nice, and very intelligent, too," she says of the contestants. "But my favorite was Miss Ireland. And that's because I was officially assigned to be her interpreter."

She says she's had her ups-and-downs in Beijing. The most traumatic was her loss of three bicycles.

"I bought a brand-new bike," she says, "and, after using it in going to my office for just two times, I lost it to thieves."

She next bought a second-hand bike.

"I hate old and rusty things but I still bought this one and repainted it myself," she says. "In no time, I lost it again to thieves."

She bought another one. This time, she picked a really old and rickety one.

"Still, I lost it again," she says.

Did she ever report the thievery to the police?

"No, never," she says. "Bicycles are stolen by the hundreds in Beijing daily. A single case has yet to be solved by the police."

She says she will soon go home to Szechuan.

"My mother wants me to get married. She says she yearns for a grandchild."

She has a boy friend of five years, whom she will marry next month.

Who will be your *ninong, ninang*? Sponsors to your wedding, in short?

"What's that?" she says.

I tell her: "They are the guys and dolls who will give you expensive gifts, even money to help you defray your wedding expenses."

"We don't have that here," she says.

How about witnesses to your wedding?

"We don't have that, either," she says. "My boy friend and I will go to this government office in Szechuan, sign papers, proceed next to a restaurant for the wedding party."

That's it?

"No. In the evening, we retreat to my mother's house and party again. Drink Mao tai till all. the guests are drunk."

Then it's honeymoon time?

"Maybe," says our bride-to-be, who was born the year Mao Zedong died in 1976. "That is, if he doesn't get to be that drunk."

Like most Chinese, she is a practicing atheist.

"My parents are atheists, too," says she. "Yes, they are members of the Communist Party of China."

How much do you know of Mao Zedong?

"He founded the new China," she says of The Great Helmsman, who celebrated his 110th birth anniversary yesterday (December 26).

That's all?

"Oh, he was a good man," she says. "But he had mistakes. He was not perfect."

Who was perfect?

"Chou En Lai."

Like timepieces, no two people are alike.

IOC executive appears, denies corruption raps

SEOUL—International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice president Kim Un-Yong voluntarily turned himself over to prosecutors for questioning here Friday following corruption allegations against him, officials said.

Kim, one of South Korea's most influential sports leaders, presented a written statement to the Seoul district prosecutors office before being turned away to be summoned at a later date, they said.

"He returned home because he has yet to be officially summoned," a prosecution source told AFP. "But, the office plans to call him in next week."

The 72-year-old IOC official denied Monday that he was involved in corruption after prosecutors arrested a former sports official accused of bribing him.

In a statement to the public, Kim said he was ready for investigation by prosecutors and denounced local media reports which described him as "a corrupt figure." Last week, prosecutors arrested Lee Kwang-Tae, a former Korea Olympic Committee (KOC) member who was in office from November 2000 to July 2002, for alleged corruption.

Prosecutors refused to confirm Lee's charges, but Yonhap news agency said Lee is suspected of providing 100 million won (84,170 dollars) to Kim to help win his KOC membership.

The arrest came after investigators raided Kim's home and office and seized a safe and documents.

Kim, also head of the World Taekwondo Federation, was one of several IOC members implicated in a corruption investigation surrounding the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

Kim's 40-year-old son, John Kim, was freed by a court in Bulgaria early this month after US authorities dropped their extradition demand on graft charges related to the Salt Lake City Olympics.

The son was arrested in Sofia six months ago on an Interpol warrant issued by the US Justice department. *AFP*

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10 FANTASTIC MAN
11 CRYING LADIES
12 MALIKMATA

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2 CRYING LADIES
3 CAPTAIN BARBELL
4 MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
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3 CRYING LADIES
4 FANTASTIC MAN

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1 CRYING LADIES
10:45 FS/12:15 MF/2:40/5:05/7:30/9:30 LFS/10:00 LMF/11:55 END

2 MANO PO 2
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7 CRYING LADIES

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1 MALIKMATA
2 HOMECOMING
3 MANO PO 2
4 FILIPINAS
5 CRYING LADIES
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7 FANTASTIC MAN
8 FILIPINAS

Novaliches
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2 FILIPINAS
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6 MANO PO 2
7 HOMECOMING
8 MANO PO 2

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Brgy. Sto. Domingo Ortigas Extension

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2 CRYING LADIES
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MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	HOMECOMING

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FANTASTIC MAN	4	FANTASTIC MAN
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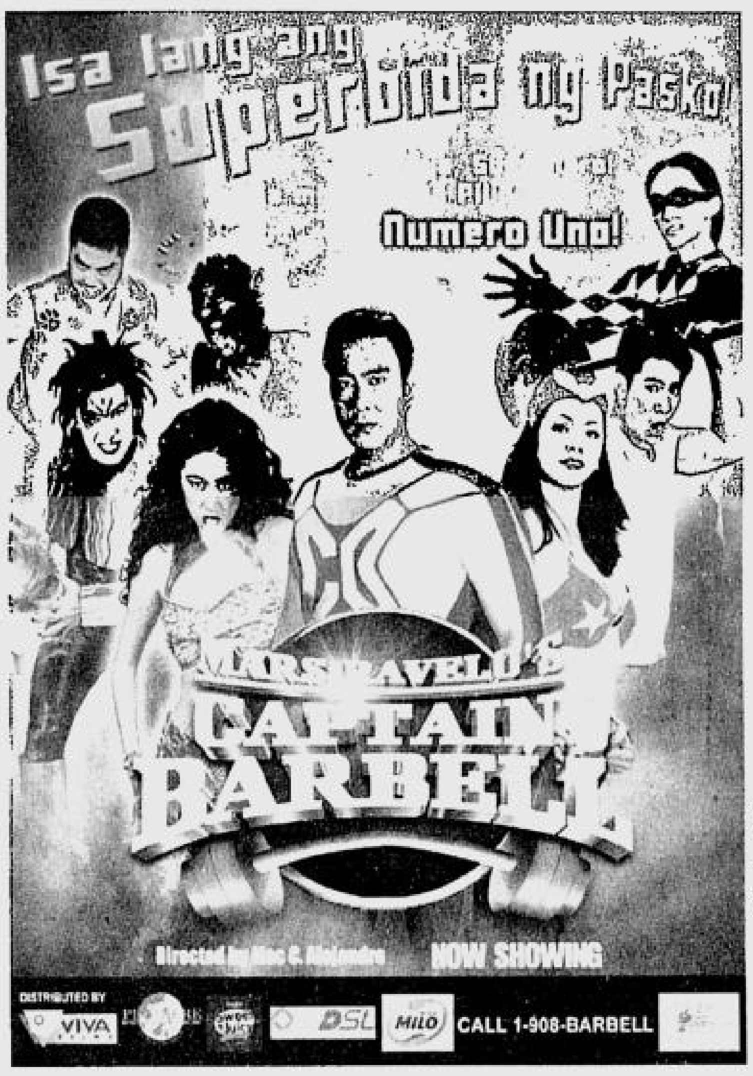

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ARCILLA

Total cash prizes at stake is P200,000 with the singles champion earning P40,000 and runner-up getting P22,000. Prizes in the doubles are P25,000 for the winners and P13,000 for the runners-up.

Players may contact Loida Mallare at the Philta office (525-6434), Melchor Sabandon (09194042138) and Henry Daut (0920-5630431). Deadline of entry is on Jan. 3 at noon.

The weeklong tournament is sanctioned by the Philippine Tennis Association with support from Dunlop Philippines, Adiong Caltex and Car Service, Maika's Convenience Store, DXSM Radio Ranao, MSU Tennis Club, Ivory Printing and Publishing House, Saavedra Paint House, Marawi Cable TV Network, See the World Travel and Tours, A&G Metalcraft, Nema Electrical Supplies and XRG Hardware.

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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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Ali 2	FILIPINAS
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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	[illegible]

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	ALIPIN
CORONET B	A MAN APART
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REMAR	X-MEN 2
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STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

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(LAS PIÑAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

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CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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MALIKMATA
HANDA KA NA BANG MATAKOT?
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HER JOURNEY BEGINS WHEN SHE RETURNS...
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MALIKMATA PG13 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55 10:00	CRYING LADIES PG13 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	FILIPINAS MAY ISANG INA GP 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:20

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1 MANO PO 2	1 MANO PO 2	ArtFilm 1 FANTASTIC MAN 11 30, 2 00, 4 30, 7 00, 9 30	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 1 MANO PO 2 12 50 3 30, 6 10 8 50 11 30	THX 1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 HOMECOMING	2 MALIKMATA 11 05, 1 10, 3 15, 5 20, 7 25, 9 30	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 2 HOMECOMING 12 40 2 50 5 00 7 10 9 20 11 30	2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FANTASTIC MAN 12 30 3 00 5 30, 8 00 10 10	Onstage GLOW Dec. 29 & 30 - 8 pm	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS 11 00 1 30 4 00 6 30 9 00 11 30	3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 FILIPINAS		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CAPTAIN BARBEL 11 00 1 30, 4 00, 6 30, 9 00, 11 30	4 CAPTAIN BARBEL
	5 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HOMECOMING 11 00 1 30 4 00 6 30 9 00 11 30	5 HOMECOMING
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6 GOLD (SDDS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
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8 CRYING LADIES
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10 MANO PO-2

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4 MALIKMATA

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3 FANTASTIC MAN

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2 FANTASTIC MAN

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3 HOMECOMING
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

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9 (DOLBY) MANO PO-2

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8 CRYING LADIES
9 MANO PO-2

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5 MANO PO-2

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4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

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1 SOON TO OPEN
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NO TO PROPOSAL

Top Mindanao leaders bat for MFG

DAYRIT

By Marc Anthony Reyes

DON'T touch the Mindanao Friendship Games.

This was the reaction of Mindanao's top political and sports leaders to a suggestion by the Philippine Olympic Committee to scrap the three-year-old meet, among many others, and divert all efforts to the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

PSC commissioner Butch Ramirez said the Mindanao leaders have expressed apprehension over the suggestion made by POC president Celso Dayrit recently.

"It is important that Mr. Dayrit and other national sports associations understand that the MFG can run on its own and without getting money from the national government," Ramirez told the INQUIRER.

He said among the leaders willing to raise funds for the MFG are Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo and Gov. Imelda Quibranza-Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte, Gov. Manny Pinol of North Cotabato, Mayor Franklin Quijano of Iligan City, Mayor Vicente Emeno of Cagayan de Oro, Mayor Aldong Parohinog of Ozamis and Mayor Rodrigo Duterte of Davao City.

Ramirez, who hails from Davao City and initiated the creation of the MFG in 2000, said the leaders met just before Christmas and showed their displeasure with the plan to scrap the MFG which also serves as the region's primary tool for peace and development.

The commissioner noted that MFG was a product of the Mindanao Sports Institute launched in Tubod, Lanao del Norte in 2000. From then on, the MFG has been held yearly in Cagayan de Oro and Mati, Davao Oriental.

Dayrit had also proposed the scrapping of the Palarong Pambansa, Batang Pinoy and the Luzon, Visayas and Philippine National Games scheduled to be launched next year to save funds for the country's third staging of the SEAG.

The PSC, which bankrolls the events, had earlier defended the staging of the meets as vital for the agency's sports development program. PSC chair Eric Buhain said the Palaro is the breeding ground of future national standouts while Rep. Monico Puentevella stresses the same reasons in battling for the continued staging of Batang Pinoy.

"With or without support, we are willing to pursue the MFG," said Ramirez. "We can always play for peace and solicit funds to pursue the Mindanaoan effort to bring in solidarity and progress in the region."

PSA to fete Agojo, 3 other jungolfers

IN recognition of their exploits in the international arena, Jayvie Agojo and three other jungolfers will be awarded citations by the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) during its Annual Awards Night on Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion.

The 17-year-old Agojo notched three big victories in her busy US campaign this year, topped by her rain-shortened win in the Optimist International at the PGA National course in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Also, the OB Montessori-Greenhills senior captured an unprecedented fourth straight championship in the Temecula International Junior Open and won the San Francisco State junior tournament.

Dottie Ardina, AR Ramos and Miguel Tabuena will also receive citations for doing the country proud in highly competitive events in the US during the 2-hour rites sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors and supported by San Miguel Corp., Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and the Philippine Basketball Association.

"At a very young age, these kids have given us honors. So it's only fitting that the PSA cites them for their achievements here and abroad. We, in the association, are proud to be with the future of local golf during the awards night," said PSA Chairman of the Board and Star Sports Editor Lito Tacujan.

Ramos, a grade-schooler at La Salle-Greenhills, is the youngest of the four awardees at seven years old. He captured the 7-years-old and below division title during the US Kids world championship held in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Ardina, daughter of a teaching pro from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, lost her bid for a second consecutive victory in the Junior World in San Diego but prevailed in the Desert Classic Championships in Palm Springs, California.

It was in the same event where the eight-year-old Tabuena, called the Filipino Tiger Woods by President Macapagal-Arroyo, also shone a month after posting his breakthrough victory in the US by topping the Selma Valley Juniors.

The four jungolfers provided the highlights to another big year for the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines headed by Gerry Handog, which scored no less than a dozen international victories in 2003.

They will join a long list of honorees led by co-athletes of the year boxing champ Manny Pacquiao and bowling hero CJ Suarez in the affair expected to be attended by President Macapagal and First Gentleman Mike.

AGOJO: Three big victories in US

PDI PHOTO

Gabica faces veterans today

TWO veterans—Daniel de la Rosa and Crescencio Baliton—aim to snatch the limelight from back-to-back Tokyo 9-Ball Open champion Antonio "Gaga" Gabica today in the quest for new billiards stars dubbed as "Search for Tanduay the No.1 Billiards Player" at the Robinson's Malls.

Gabica is actually eyeing his fifth week of stay as the featured cue artist of this event conceptualized by Tanduay advertising manager Larry Li and supported by Tanduay marketing manager Andres Co.

However, he admits facing these veterans would be much tougher compared to the past four weeks of this search sponsored by Tanduay the No.1 Rhum, Robinson's Malls and Rommel's Billiards—the official table.

The two matches will be aired over the National Broadcasting Network tonight on prime time, 8-9, with the blow-by-blow accounts provided by Danny Romero and billiards analyst Recah Trinidad.

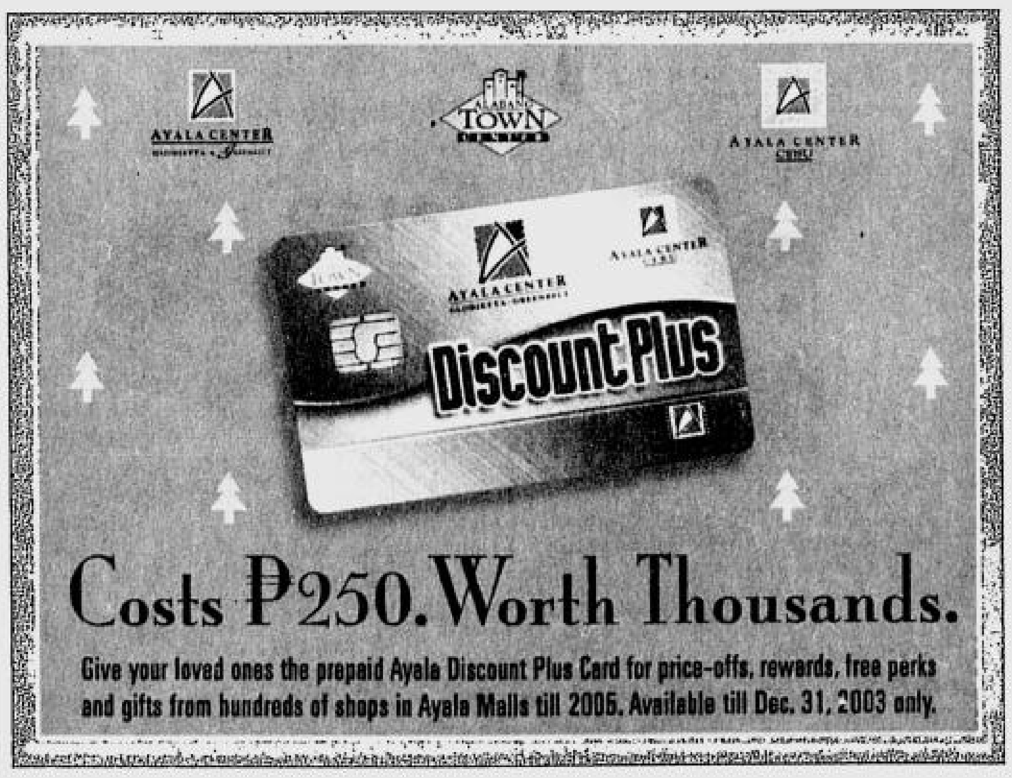
De la Rosa, who bagged the 2003 Araw ng Pasig 9-Ball Open Championship plum, was part of the Accel team together with European champion Marcus Chamat and Chris Dayrit that made it to the semifinals of the Corporate Billiards League.

Baliton is a much tougher rival. Like Gabica, Baliton was also a product of the Tokyo 9-Ball Open where he bagged the Classic division plum last year.

The two challengers must beat Gabica twice to unseat the latter as the featured billiards cue artist.

The overall champion this year gets sponsorship from Tanduay as its homegrown star and shall carry the colors of Tanduay and the Philippine flag in prestigious international competitions.

For inquiries, call the Corporate Billiards League secretariat at 0918-9219934 or email corporatebilliardsleague@yahoo.com.



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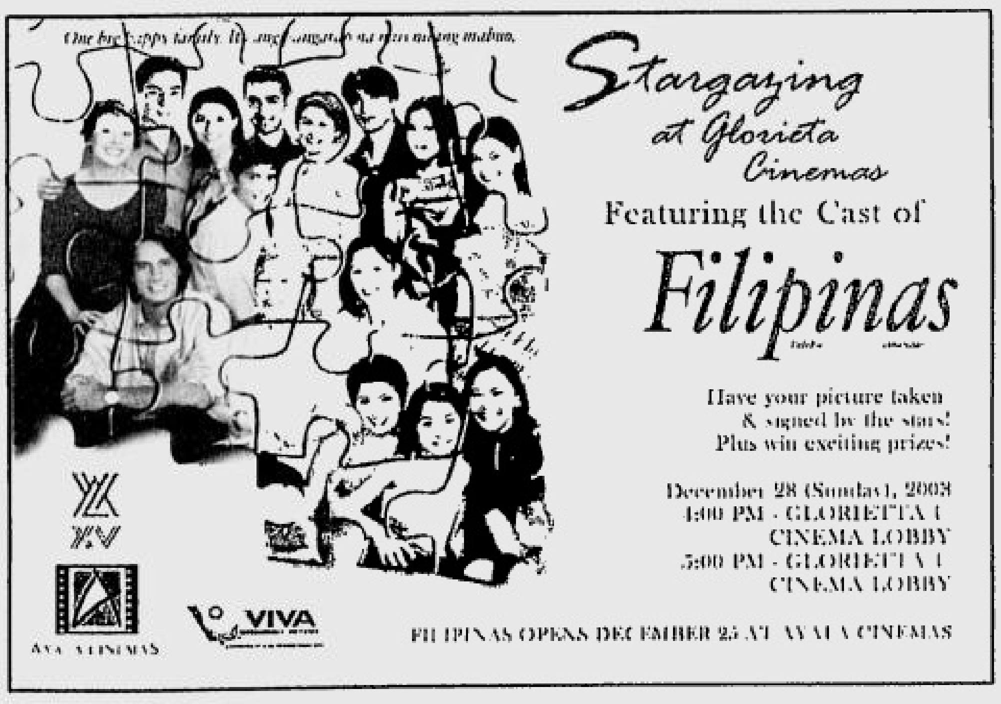

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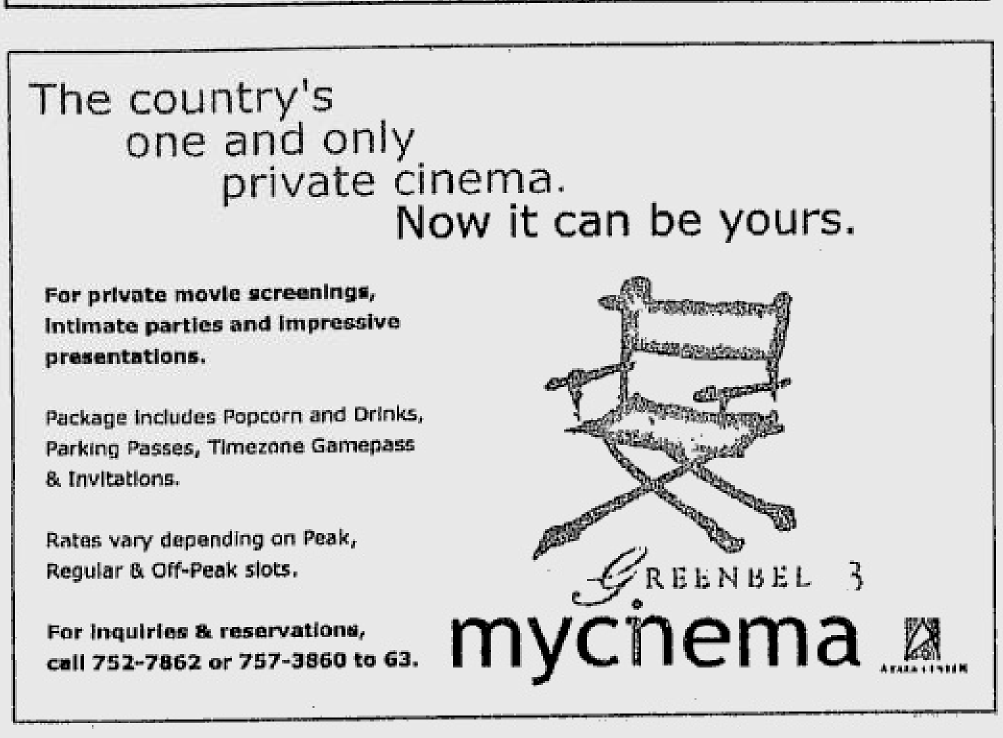
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 4 CINEMA LOBBY
7:00 PM - GREENBELT 3 CINEMA LOBBY
December 28 (Sunday), 2003
1:00PM - ALABANG TOWN CENTER CINEMA LOBBY
VIVA
CAPTAIN BARBELL OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS



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Compiled by L. Manguiat

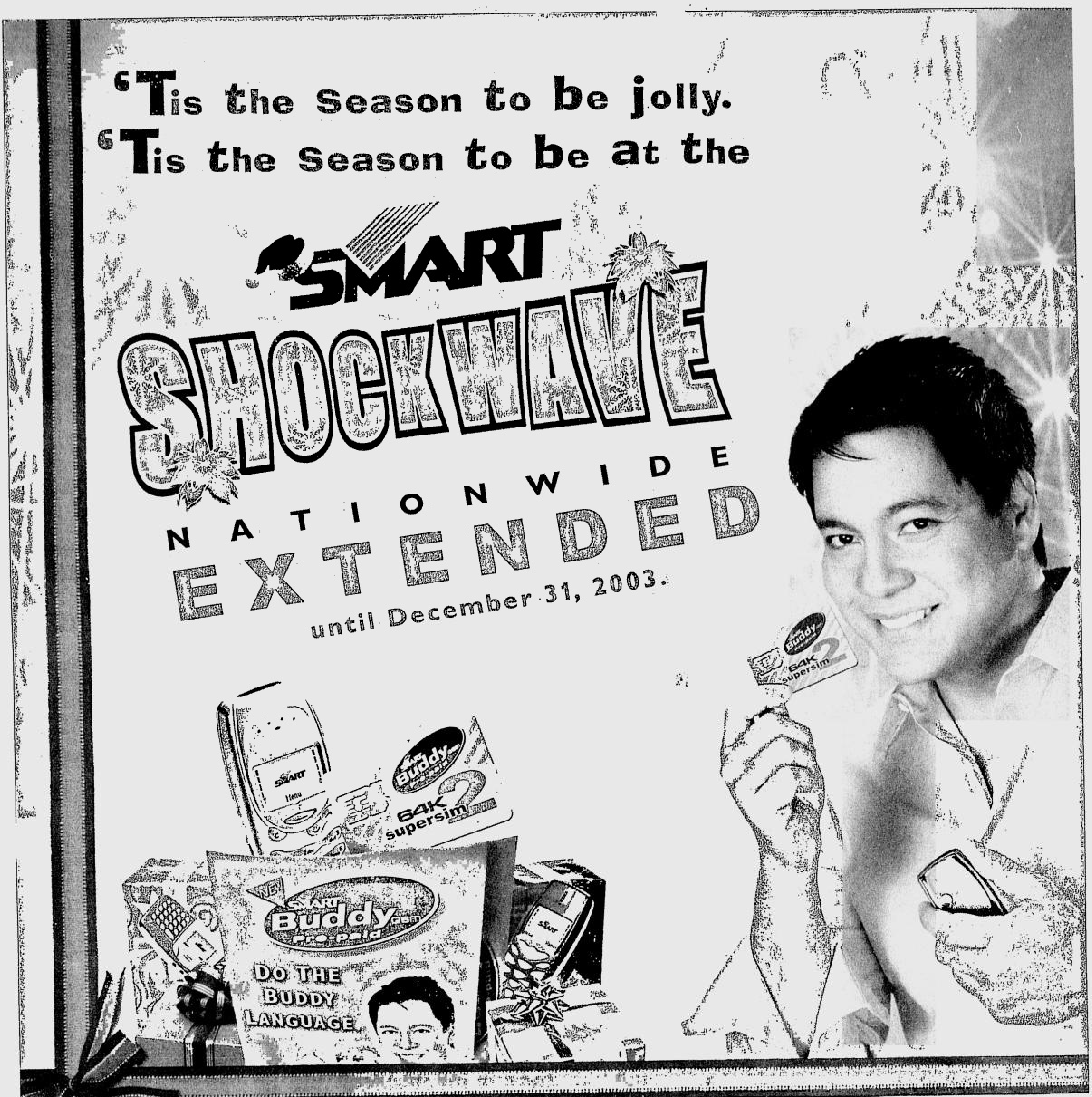
BASKETBALL: NBA-Nets vs Pistons; 9 a.m. (r-9:30 p.m.); ESPN; Magic vs Spurs; 9:30 a.m. (r - 8 p.m.); Solar Sports; Blazers vs T-Wolves; 11:30 a.m. (r-5 p.m.); ESPN—It's a rematch of last season's Eastern Conference Finals between New Jersey and Detroit then the NBA's worst team, Orlando, takes on defending champion San Antonio, while Portland travels to the Twin Cities to take on Minnesota.

NBA Greatest Game-Lakers vs Spurs, Game 4, 2002 Western Semifinals; 12 noon; Solar Sports—LA and San Antonio engage in one of the more memorable playoff matches

BILLIARDS: US 9 Ball; 10:30 p.m.; Solar Sports—Jose Parica goes up against Jeremy Jones.

BADMINTON: Hong Kong Badminton Open 2003; 5 p.m.; Solar Sports—The world's best badminton players gather in the former crown colony.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.



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Nov. 21 - Ruby Chong
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Nov. 22 - Juliet Anosan
Baguio City
Nov. 23 - Maricar De Dios
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Nov. 24 - Paolo Pila
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Nov. 25 - Glenn Capaguje
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Nov. 26 - Jorge Fajardo
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Nov. 28 - Cristina Calinog
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Nov. 30 - Ivy Enriquez
Zamboanga City
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Dec. 2 - Juanito Dela Cruz
Candaba, Pampanga
Dec. 3 - Mary Car Montecastro
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Dec. 4 - Vergie Siarot
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Napocor to withdraw rate-setting scheme

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE CASH-STRAPPED National Power Corp. is expected to withdraw its petition for a new rate-making scheme, for which it had been given a provisional authority to raise rates by between 34 and 56 centavos per kilowatt-hour.

In an order dated Oct. 10, the Energy Regulatory Commission said Napocor's selling rate in Luzon should go up by 34 centavos to P2.24 per kWh from P2.12 per kWh starting last November.

The order also allowed Napocor to gradually raise its rates in the Visayas every quarter over the next four quarters up to P2.82 per kWh (in the third quarter of 2004) or 41 centavos higher than the current P2.41 per kWh.

The new scheme dubbed "long-run avoidable costs" (LRAC) method bases rate-making on the assumed rates that could be offered by a 'best new entrant' in the industry, which refers to a very efficient power plant that could be constructed starting this year.

In the ERC order, such plant is a coal-fired generator running at 91-percent efficiency.

Early this week, ERC Chair Manuel R. Sanchez said Napocor officials gave indications that the power firm was withdrawing the petition.

"They seem to have found a problem with it, but they have yet to file any paper on that," Sanchez said.

In a separate interview, a government official familiar with the matter said there would no filing for withdrawal and instead the issue would be allowed to "die quietly."

"Napocor is again filing a petition to recover deferred generation costs under the Generation Rate Adjustment Mechanism or Gram, which the LRAC was supposed to have superseded," the source said.

In October, a Napocor official said the company would continue losing money even with the LRAC method.

On condition of anonymity, the official said the increased rates were still "artificially low."

The official said rates under the LRAC still fell short of the adjustments that the company needed to recover costs.

The LRAC forces existing power producers to run as efficiently--and thus offer a competitive price—as against a new entrant, the official added.

The official added that Napocor could not match the performance and selling rates of a new entrant without incurring losses.

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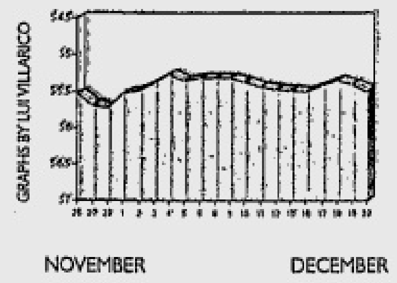

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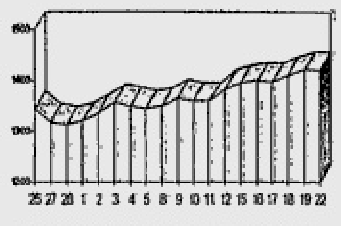
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2003

STOCK MARKET

Stocks seen to rise

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

MODERATE window-dressing is expected to continue when stock trading resumes on Monday. The exchange had been closed since Dec. 24, an official holiday. The main stock index gained 6.37 points or 0.45 percent to 1,427.40 points on Dec. 23. The market is up 40.16 percent so far this year.

"We still expect some pockets of buying in the next sessions that might push the market to a year-to-date high of 1,435," said BPI Securities investment analyst Spencer Yap.

Stock analysts said the index might test the 1,430 range in the last two trading days of the year on Dec. 29 and 30 as players position ahead of the new year.

"Trading in the coming sessions would still be dictated by the mild seasonal window-dressing activities of fund managers and continued shifting of funds toward blue chips widely expected to post strong earnings performance in the coming quarters," said RCBC Securities stock analyst Edwin Gil Mendoza.

Reuters

Gov't says beef supply adequate despite US import ban

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture has assured the public that there would be no beef shortage despite the temporary ban on beef imports from the United States.

The assurance was given by Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. in a phone interview yesterday with the INQUIRER, after the agency imposed a moratorium on US beef imports late this week.

The DA received reports that cattle from a still undisclosed US state were infected with the mad cow disease.

Lorenzo noted that there were other sources of manufacturing grade beef that could supply local meat processors, notably Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and India.

The Philippines imports about 10,000 to 25,000 metric tons of manufacturing grade beef a year from the United States for processing into burger beef patties and other meat products. Total beef imports are estimated at 70,000 to 100,000 metric tons annually amounting to about P7 billion.

Lorenzo, however, clarified that while there was yet no administrative order issued by his office to make the meat import ban official, a moratorium on the issuance of veterinary quarantine clearance certificates is currently being observed by the DA, the National Meat Inspection Commission and the Bureau of Animal Industry.

"The moratorium on US beef imports is indefinite until there is an assurance that their meat products are safe," said National Meat Inspection Commission Director Efren Nuestro in a separate interview.

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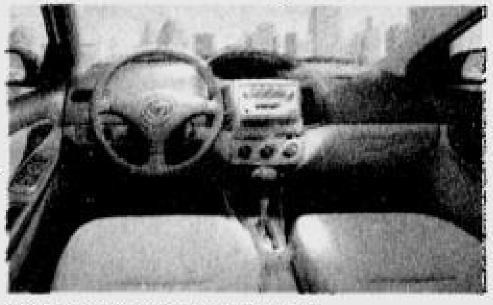

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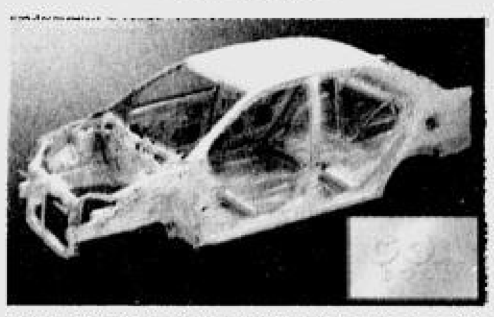

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Consolidation of cable firms expected by end-January

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CONSOLIDATION of dominant cable firms SkyCable Central CATV Inc. and Philippine Home Cable Holdings Inc. will likely be completed by the end of next month, a company executive has said.

Manuel Pangilinan, president and chief executive of Home Cable parent firm Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., said the signing of a memorandum of agreement restructuring the cable firms' debts would pave the way for the completion of the consolidation.

"With the completion of the debt restructuring agreement, we'll likely see consolidation by the end of January," he said.

After months of negotiations, SkyCable-Home Cable consortium Beyond Cable Holdings Inc. on Oct. 17 finally signed a memorandum of agreement with majority of the two cable firms' creditors, paving the way for an actual debt restructuring agreement as well as the complete consolidation of the two firms.

Equitable-PCIBank, Bank of the Philippine Islands and the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines have the biggest exposures in the two cable operators.

However, an industry source said the creditors, particularly BPI, were quite reluctant to actually go into a debt-restructuring agreement with the cable firms as the problem of signal piracy posed a huge threat to the companies' long-term viability.

"Sky has 120,000 paying subscribers, while Home has almost 100,000. These are below breakeven points. Banks want them to double their subscriber base to stay viable. How? They should first be able to address the problem of piracy," the source said.

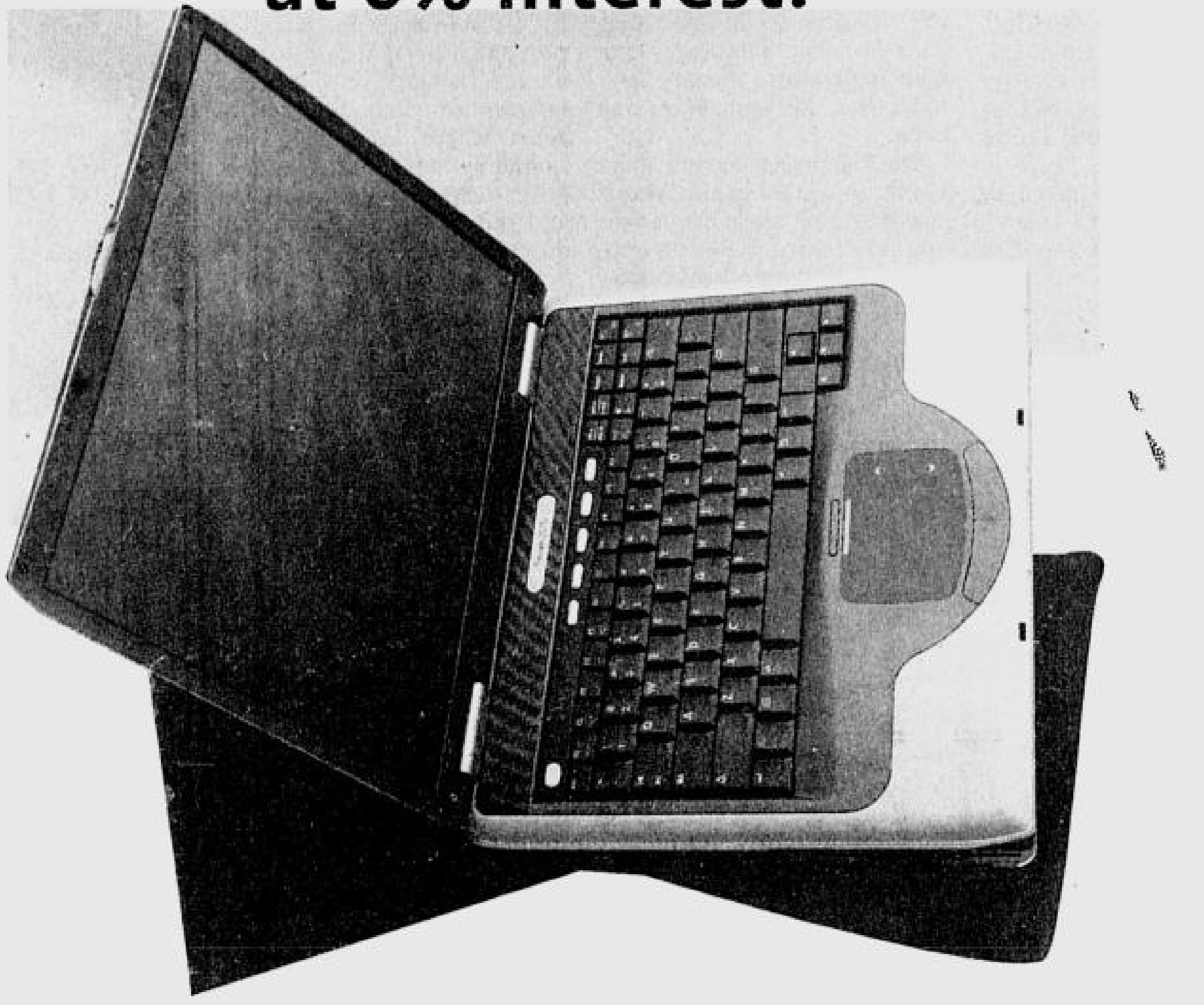
Pangilinan said part of the business plan that Beyond Cable submitted to SkyCable and Home Cable's creditor-banks involved the introduction of decoder boxes that would help curb rampant piracy in the cable television industry.

Program encryption could possibly curb signal piracy as only legitimate cable subscribers with activated decoder boxes would be able to watch the shows in a specific cable firm's line-up.

"The plan is to introduce boxes as well as tiered programming. It's part of the business plan," he said.

With decoder boxes in place, the Beyond Cable consortium will also start offering tiered programming to their subscribers, which will mean that subscribers will start getting only the channels that they pay for.

The lowest tier will contain programs from basic genres including movies, sports, news and music. The higher the tier that a subscriber pays for, the more programs are included in the line-up.



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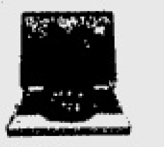

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 23, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.25	17	17.25	25,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46.5	46	46.5	334,600
China Banking Corp.	675	675	675	675	380
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	98,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	1,430,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27	27	26.5	26.5	113,100
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.25	24	24.25	42,500
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	27	25	27	600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.3	2.3	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.44	0.5	0.44	0.5	320,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	170	170	170	170	250
Manulife Financial Corp.	1740	1750	1735	1750	1,590
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.34	431,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	210	210	210	210	11,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1305	1320	1305	1320	880
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	38,700
Diversified Fin. Network	2	2	2	2	5,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.7	3,650,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	845	845	845	26,090
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.98	540,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.039	0.04	2,500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.91	0.89	0.9	5,180,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	950	950	930	935	39,970
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	51,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	66,000
Manila Electric Co. B	24	24.25	24	24.25	228,300
Petron Corp.	2.24	2.36	2.24	2.32	10,265,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	300,000
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Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	125,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	310,000
Union Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	11,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	32	32	32	32	9,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17.5	18.25	17.5	18.25	634,700
San Miguel Corp. A	53.5	54	53.5	54	43,400
San Miguel Corp. B	63	63.5	63	63.5	83,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	10,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
Ayala Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	5,210,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	9,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.025	0.023	0.025	4,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.84	0.86	0.84	0.86	3,510,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	3,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	180,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.175	0.18	290,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	100,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	7,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	164,600
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	2,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	3,601,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	10,290,000
Music Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	250,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	90,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.88	1	0.88	1	40,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	6.9	7.2	6.9	7	15,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	2,000,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	26	26	26	26	1,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	323,800
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	1,530,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	2,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25	25	25	563,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7	7.1	7	7	11,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc	6	6.1	6	6	6,888,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.22	1,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,000,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	9,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	2,554,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	1,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	8,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,150,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	200,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	30,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	10,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	400,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P
Bank & Fin Svc	2,878,100	31,793,095.0
Comm'l & Ind'l	112,538,160	180,957,125.0
PRO	12,251,000	59,301,610.0
Mining	12,430,000	1,371,250.0
OIL	40,400,000	192,000.00
GRAND TOTALS	180,497,260	273,615,080.00
AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	436.85	UP 5.48
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,157.00	UP 6.72
PRO	588.53	UP 2.79
Mining	1,589.00	DOWN 9.37
OIL	1.26	UP 0.05
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	861.49	UP 9.99
Composite	1,427.40	UP 6.37

NO. OF ADVANCES: 38; NO. OF DECLINES: 16; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 41; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 95.
NO. OF TRADES: 1,328

CURRENCIES

December 26, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.806517	1.000000	55.464000
Japan	Yen	0.007502	0.009302	0.515900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.422534	1.763800	97.827400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103892	0.128816	7.144700
Switzerland	Franc	0.641263	0.795102	44.099500
Canada	Dollar	0.606221	0.751654	41.689700
Singapore	Dollar	0.472006	0.585240	32.459800
Australia	Dollar	0.591808	0.733783	40.698500
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.139302	2.652520	147.119400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215054	0.266645	14.789200
Brunei	Dollar	0.470629	0.583533	32.365100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006500
Thailand	Baht	0.020377	0.025265	1.401300
UAE	Dirham	0.219610	0.272294	15.102500
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.239900	68.769800
Argentina	Peso	0.272472	0.337838	18.737800
Brazil	Real	0.275826	0.341997	18.968500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134386	0.166625	9.241700
India	Rupee	0.017753	0.022012	1.220900
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212270	0.263193	14.597700
Mexico	New Peso	0.071392	0.088519	4.909600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.517130	0.641190	35.563000
Norway	Kroner	0.119772	0.148505	8.236700
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014112	0.017498	0.970500
South Africa	Rand	0.116910	0.144957	8.039900
Korea	Won	0.000676	0.000838	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110052	0.136454	7.568300
Syria	Pound	0.018226	0.022599	1.253400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023756	0.029455	1.633700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000506	0.000627	0.034800

NSC to reopen; 500 workers to get back jobs

By Michelle V. Remo

AFTER shutting down operations in 1999 because of losses and billions of pesos in debts, the National Steel Corp. is regaining life.

Not a few thought that attracting foreign firms to invest in the debt-ridden NSC would be difficult, if not impossible. Now, two big foreign steel manufacturers are seriously competing to sign a deal with the Iligan steel plant's creditor-banks.

The reopening of NSC, which has P16 billion in debts, is vital to the city of Iligan because it is expected to bring back to work the estimated 500 former employees who were displaced after the steel plant's closure four years ago.

Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano, pleased with the prospect of reopening the NSC, said his constituents are already looking forward to the immediate rehabilitation of the NSC, which is expected to boost economic activity in the area.

The Department of Trade and Industry, for its part, said the rehabilitation of the NSC is expected to begin as early as 2004 should the group of creditor-banks, which is headed by the Philippine National Bank, agree on the terms of the offer of the foreign bidder, Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd.

GIHL, a subsidiary of the Ispat Group of India, won in November the right for a 90-day exclusive talk with creditor-banks after placing a bid price of P11.9 billion, much higher than the P7 billion originally offered by the only other bidder LNM Holdings N.V.

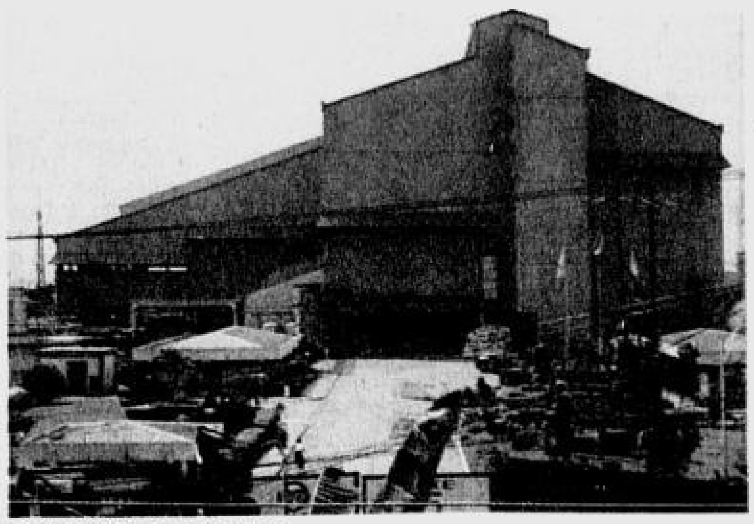
During the 90-day period, creditor-banks are allowed to negotiate only with GIHL on the improvement of the bidder's original offer.

Recently, the banks accepted the improved offer of GIHL, which raised the original P11.90 billion bid to P12.25 billion and placed an up front cash payment of P1 billion. The new offer also includes an additional $25-million investment that will be poured in during the first two years of NSC's reoperation.

Challenge

But while talks with GIHL seems to be smoothly progressing, rival firm LNM has not given up on its bid, and has in fact challenged the offer of GIHL.

"If there is someone who can bring NSC back to profitability, it should be LNM. We go with the commitment to turn it around and run it forever," Kumar Arun Prasad Singh, chief operating officer of the LNM subsidiary and Czech-based Ispat Nova Hut, told Filipino reporters during a press conference in Ostrava, Czech Republic early this month.



THE STEEL plant in Iligan

LNM general manager Eric Tiere said LNM is willing to increase its P7-billion bid and match that of GIHL by transforming the profit-sharing scheme included in its original offer into "hot cash." He also said LNM is willing to pay an up front cash payment of P2.5 billion and invest $70 million (P350 million) in raw materials and facility upgrade in the first year of NSC's reoperation.

FEATURE

He said the company 'is determined to pursue talks with NSC creditor-banks if no agreement is signed with GIHL within the 90-day exclusivity period, which will lapse in February next year.

Regretting the chance to grab the 90-day exclusivity for LNM, Tiere said the creditor banks failed to consider the profit-sharing scheme, which he said was part of the terms of its bid and which could have made LNM's offer "more attractive" than that of GIHL.

"How could they decide the other bid was better if they never asked about the profit-sharing," he said, although refusing to declare the actual value of the scheme when translated into cash amount.

"LNM Group has established a unique reputation for its ability to acquire under performing steel-producing assets and to turn them around to exhibit demonstrably superior results," he said, adding it only takes an average of two or three years for LNM to turn around debt-ridden steel firms it acquired.

He cited the Czech-based LNM subsidiary Ispat Nova Hut, which recovered from (CzK) 5 billion koruna (about $200 million) in debt and CzK 500 million (about $20 million) in losses, and generated CzK1 billion (about $40 million) in profit in 2002, a year after LNM took over the formerly state-owned steel firm.

China market

Both LNM and GIHL are fighting for the right to run the NSC because its reopening will be critical in getting a huge share of the increasing demand for steel in the Asian region, especially in the highly populated Chinese market.

Demand in China is now being considered the driver of the global steel industry.

GIHL and LNM are also eyeing to compete with huge steel firms that are currently generating huge revenues in China.

Singh admitted LNM is keen on winning NSC because "we would like to grow in that part of the world," explaining that while it already operates a 600,000-metric-ton-per-year-capacity steel plant in Indonesia, the additional and much bigger production that will come from the Philippines as well as the country's strategic location will be a precious trophy for the winning bidder.

NSC's capacity was much bigger at 1.5 million metric tons per year.

Rumors against LNM spread via the Internet that the foreign steel firm only wanted to operate it for a short time and later shut it down because of the threat it poses to its steel firm in Indonesia.

"Why would we shut down something that is already not running," said LNM' Eric Tiere in an earlier briefing with reporters, dismissing the rumor as "absurd."

But while LNM and GIHL seem to be tough competitors, owners of the two firms actually come from the same Mittal family of India.

Laughing off insinuations that the two companies could merely be faking competition so that the same family could benefit from the NSC bidding, Tiere said LNM would not bother to increase its offer if that were the case.

Company officials, however, admitted that owners of the two firms come from the same family. Singh explained LNM is owned by Laksmi Nivas Mittal, the eldest and the breakaway son of the M.L. Mittal

On the other hand, GIHL is the subsidiary of the Ispat Group of India, which is owned and operated by the father and his two other sons Pranod and Vinod.

Singh said LNM was formed in the mid-1990s after Laksmi Nivas separated from his father and two brothers—for reasons Singh did not mention—and put up his own steel company in Indonesia that has been the cornerstone of the LNM Group.

Now the LNM group, whose total global production is expected to reach over 35 million metric tons of steel by year-end, claims to be the second largest steel firm following the European steel giant Arcelor, and expects to reach the highest spot next year.

LRTA to post losses for 8th straight year

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CASH-STRAPPED Light Rail Transit Authority admits it will continue to post losses this year for the eighth consecutive year.

LRTA Administrator Teodoro Cruz Jr. said factoring in all financial charges for its P32.3 billion in public debts as of end-2002, the railway authority was highly unlikely to post a net income.

"Even breakeven is highly improbable. If we include debt servicing, we'll really be in a net loss position. We've been posting losses since 1985. Fares can hardly cover financial charges," he said.

As of end-June, the LRTA's financial charges had reached P334 million, while operational expenses were placed at P510 million. Revenues, on the other hand, were pegged at P580 million.

Last year, the LRTA generated more than P1.2 billion in net revenues. Its expenses stood at P998 million while its financial charges were placed at P659 million.

But Cruz was quick to add that railway systems all over the world were actually suffering the same fate.

"All rail systems in the world are not earning. The only way you can say that a rail system is doing well is by looking at the farebox ratio," he said.

The farebox ratio refers to the ratio of net revenues to direct operating expenses. A farebox ratio of 1 or greater than 1 then means a high operating efficiency as net revenues are enough or even more than sufficient to cover operating expenses.

As of last year, the LRTA had a farebox ratio of 1.21, higher than the 1.15 posted in 2001.

Cruz also noted that the high financial charges could be attributed to the peso's continuous nosedive over the past years. He said most borrowings were made when the exchange rate was around P8 to a dollar.

The peso had been averaging between P54 and P55 to a dollar these past months.

To help keep the railway system afloat, the LRTA had also initiated an indirect fare hike to help augment its operating income.

LRTA planning manager Evangeline Razon said the new fare scheme was designed to allow the LRTA to become more viable as well as give it additional cash to finance its operational as well as debt-servicing requirements.

She said the fare rationalization scheme would rake in an additional P185 million per year for the LRTA.

Under the new fare scheme, passengers will pay a minimum fare of P12 and a maximum fare of P15, unlike the 19-year-old fare structure that has a P12 flat rate for the whole line, except if a passenger rides at any of the last four stations at either end.

The LRTA last adjusted its fare in February 2000, increasing it from P10 to P12. The last big fare adjustment before that, a P5 increase, was implemented in September 1999, lasted all of two days as it was met by public uproar. The P10 fare then was jacked up to P15.

Cruz said the LRTA badly needed a fare adjustment as it could not address its debt-servicing requirements.

Being a government owned and controlled corporation (GOCC), the LRTA relied on the National Treasury for its debt servicing. However, the government this year passed up on LRTA loan payments due to the ballooning budget deficit.

"For the first six months of the year, the P250 million that we had to pay (to creditors) came from our own budget," Cruz said.

He said the LRTA had to resort to a fare adjustment so it could remain afloat.

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CONDO/TWNHSE

KALOOCAN

NEW 1BR•2BR COM'L CLINIC•OFFICE•P6.5Tup #162 P. Jacinto cor. #39 Biglang Awa Caloocan 323-0175

MAKATI

NEW STUDIO / Coml / 2BR 6.5Tup 1672 Dian St. Mktl 843-9418•0918 9390355 Rose

QUEZON CITY

3BR Valencia corner Casilla St T7267909 / 09175325838 Rowena

APARTMENT

MANILA

1BR nr P.GIL 5634007 5642878

MANDALUYONG

845 Samat St., Mand. City
Tel. # 5337709 to 12

ROOM & BOARD

Prj3 new 3.5T studio9137513

BUSINESS RENTAL

AYALA AVE T8181696/7586

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

FARM/FISHPEN/ RAWLANDS

BATANGAS

TAAL BTGS nr Diversion Rd 6794m² P185.50/m² Vic8903461

BULACAN

SAN MIGUEL LA 4000m² P180/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

FINANCING-EASY FAST VERY PRIVATE CONVENIENT H/L BUSINESS PERSONAL Gigie /Ernie 8903461 loc25/23

OTHER REAL ESTATE

REALTORS/SEMINAR

Looking for 1000has. Dinalupihan 0920-9112910

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

MITSUBISHI

00MX 1st Owner Matic US edition 8330796 09175309804

TOYOTA

'92 Corolla XE A1 cond 165Tneg DBO 09209111743

93 COROLLA XE 175T Well-maintained Silver 9121506

FX97 • T(0917) 8176435

SPECIAL CARS

CHEVROLET SUBURBAN 2001 Vortec V8 Engine 5.7 Disp. First Owned 33K Mileage with T.V. & VCD player 1.7M Neg 09209110487

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

CHIPEST IN TOWN Starex MB100 Coaster Bus Hi-Ace • 637-7396

A B C CARS/VANS
NEW MODELS W/ OR W/O DRIVER
MLA HO 536-8822 • 303-789
Q.C BR 426-2278 • 426-4084

Bnew Vans 8254058 8261045

CARS/ VANS/ BRIDAL/ 8969956

★Vans Coaster Bus 422-9296

Cheap Van Rental 9330311

L300 VAN 4711695 09163443087

L300/ADV. 741-1356

REVO w/driver 9272821

CAR LOAN

1.5% Fast Car Loan 3677523/24

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 788-0357

1.5% CARLOAN 952-2510

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/76

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

ASSET MANAGEMENT GROUP
We manage for best value.

PNB

PUBLIC AUCTION

JANUARY 15, 2004 • THURSDAY • 2:00 p.m.
PENTHOUSE, B.A. LEPANTO BUILDING
PASEO DE ROXAS AVENUE, MAKATI CITY

- ➢ VALUE FOR MONEY DEALS
- ➢ GUARANTEED FINANCING
- ➢ FIXED INTEREST UP TO 10 YEARS
- ➢ 10% DOWNPAYMENT FOR LOTS
- ➢ 25% DOWNPAYMENT FOR DEVELOPED PROPERTIES

CAVITE

Lot 1 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 656 sqm
LOT 10 BLK 15 CITYVIEW 1 BRGY. KALINAWAN, TANZA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 372,000

Lot 2 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 200 sqm
LOT 12 BLK 19 CONNECTICUT ST. MANUELAVILLE SUBD., BUROL, DASMARIÑAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 618,000

Lot 3 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 1,000 sqm
LOT 40 BLK 7, RODEO COUNTRY ESTATE, BRGY MANGGAS, ALFONSO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,013,000

Lot 4 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 1,347 sqm
LOT 51 BLK 12, MANGA ST., GREENFIELD HTS, BUCAL, DASMARIÑAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,819,000

Lot 5 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 6,504 sqm
LOT 8414, BRGY ZAMBAL, TAGAYTAY CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 2,052,000

Lot 6 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 1,000 sqm
LOT 10 BLK 10, RODEO COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE, ALFONSO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,200,000

Lot 7 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 925 sqm
LOT 12, BLK 6, RODEO COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE, ALFONZO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 981,000

Lot 8 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 1,000 sqm
LOT 17 BLK. 7 RODEO COUNTRYSIDE SUBD.,ESPERANZA,ALFONSO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 840,000

Lot 9 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 1,000 sqm
LOT 19 BLK. 7 RODEO COUNTRYSIDE SUBD.,ESPERANZA,ALFONSO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 840,000

Lot 10 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 542 sqm
LOT 1-B BISITA ST., BINAKAYAN, KAWIT
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 6,696,000

Lot 11 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 86 sqm Floor Area: 56 sqm
LOT 14 BLK 9, NARA ST, SHERWOOD HOMS, ANABU, IMUS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 492,000

Lot 12 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 90 sqm Floor Area: 90 sqm
LOT 17 BLK 18-C, YAKAL, BULIHAN RESETTLEMENT PH 3, SILANG
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 410,000

Lot 13 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 88 sqm Floor Area: 31 sqm
LOT 24 BLK 33, SAINT CLEMEN ST. WINWARD HILLS SUBD., BUROL, DASMARIÑAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 316,000

Lot 14 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 380 sqm
Floor Area: 304 sqm
112 REAL ROAD, MALIKSI, BACOOR
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,809,000

Lot 15 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 97 sqm Floor Area: 75 sqm
LOT 56 BLK 58, WINWARD HILLS SUBD., PHASE 2 DASMARIÑAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 739,000

Lot 16 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 832 sqm
Floor Area: 78 sqm
271 COVELANDIA ROAD, BINAKAYAN, KAWIT
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,877,000

Lot 17 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 390 sqm
Floor Area: 156 sqm
LOT 31 BLK 1, DON GREGORIO HEIGHTS SUBD., BRGY ABUBOT, DASMARIÑAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,330,000

Lot 18 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 263 sqm
Floor Area: 51 sqm
LOT 1 BLK 6 FIREWOOD COR. EVERLASTING STS. STA CECILIA SUBD. MULAWIN, TANZA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 773,000

Lot 19 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 900 sqm
Floor Area: 150 sqm
LOT 1052-C-1 BO. TIMALAN, NAIC
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 810,000

LAGUNA

Lot 20 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 125 sqm
LOT 34 BLK 29, PHASE 1-D, GOLDEN CITY SUBD, DILA STA ROSA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 208,000

Lot 21 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 135 sqm
LOT 18978 BRGY. STA MARIA MAGDALENA SAN PABLO CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 368,000

Lot 22 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 175 sqm
LOT 3093-NEW-B-5 PH II, SPRINGHOMES SUBD., BUCAL
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 313,000

Lot 23 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 211sqm
Floor Area: 468 sqm
LOT 1149-B, BO. POOK, STA ROSA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 3,558,000

Lot 24 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 240 sqm
Floor Area: 98 sqm
LOT 418-X-13-A-1, VILLA SOLEDAD SUBD., SAN CRISTOBAL CALAMBA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 740,000

Lot 25 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 136 sqm
Floor Area: 48 sqm
LOT 30-A, ST. CHRISTOPHER II ANNEX, BRGY. MAJADA, CALAMBA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 570,000

Lot 26 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 130 sqm
Floor Area: 49 sqm
LOT 3 BLK 2, VILLA ESTELA SUBD, BACLARAN, CABUYAO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 370,000

Lot 27 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 285 sqm
Floor Area: 88 sqm
LOT 25 BLK 18, ILOILO ST., SOUTH CITY HOMES PH2, STO TOMAS, BIÑAN
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 907,000

Lot 28 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 141 sqm
Floor Area: 60 sqm
LOT 32 BLK 2 DON PABLO SUBD, TAGAPO, STA ROSA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 765,000

Lot 29 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 376 sqm
Floor Area: 40 sqm
277 BRGY. LOOC, CALAMBA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 469,000

Lot 30 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 3,288 sqm
Floor Area: 88 sqm
LOT 245-C, # 92 CABALLERO ST., BRGY. SAMPIRUHAN CALAMBA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 4,124,000

Lot 31 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 200 sqm
Floor Area: 57 sqm
LOTS 11 & 12 BLK 5, RAYMUNDA AVE., MILLWOOD SUBD., PULO, CABUYAO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 719,000

Lot 32 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 180 sqm
Floor Area: 49 sqm
LOT 10 BLK 4 MA. JESUSA SUBD., BALIBAGO, STA ROSA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 496,000

Lot 33 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 500 sqm
Floor Area: 42 sqm
LOT 23 BLK 4, BLISS HOUSING, PACIANO RIZAL BAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 477,000

Lot 34 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 235 sqm
Floor Area: 54 sqm
LOT 2-B-2-1-8 VILLA ESTELA SUBD, BACLARAN, CABUYAO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 636,000

Lot 35 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 180 sqm
Floor Area: 115 sqm
LOT 5 BLK 4, ABELARDO ST., CHRYSANTHEMUM VILL., SAN PEDRO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,104,000

Lot 36 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 582 sqm
Floor Area: 60 sqm
PUROK I. BRGY. TRANCA, BAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 360,000

Lot 37 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 393 sqm
Floor Area: 88 sqm
115 PROVINCIAL ROAD. BRGY. MAITIM, BAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 981,000

Lot 38 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 359 sqm
Floor Area: 77 sqm
LOT 7 DULONG YLAYA, MALABAN, BIÑAN
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 566,000

Lot 39 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 92.5 sqm
Floor Area: 56 sqm
LOT 16-S BLOCK 19 FLORIDA ST. SOUTHVILLE SUVD. CALABOSO, BIÑAN
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 479,000

Lot 40 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 267.95 sqm
Floor Area: 110 sqm
LOT 317-A 964 VALEJO ST. MALUSAK STA. ROSA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 942,000

Lot 41 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 240 sqm
Floor Area: 69 sqm
LOT 2 BLK 7 BEGONIA ST, CERIS I SUBD CANLUBANG, CALAMBA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 711,000

BATANGAS

Lot 42 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 462 sqm
LOT 5 BLK 2 ACELA HOMES SUBD., ANTIPOLO DEL NORTE, LIPA CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,478,000

Lot 43 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 165 sqm
LOT 2 BLOCK 4, AGASAKA ST. SAKURA EXECUTIVE SUBD. LIPA CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 484,000

Lot 44 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 801 sqm
LOT 847-B-3 INT. B. MORADA AVE. LIPA CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 3,405,000

Lot 45 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area:1,142sqm
FloorArea:137sqm
OLD PROV'L ROAD COR BRGY ROAD, SITIO PAG-ASA, BRGY. PANTAY, CALACA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,353,000

Lot 46 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 115 sqm
Floor Area: 42 sqm
LOT 4 BLK 5, SAN ISIDRO VILLAGE, BATANGAS CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 589,000

Lot 47 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 115 sqm
Floor Area: 42 sqm
LOT 6 BLK 5, SAN ISIDRO VILLAGE, BATANGAS CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 589,000

RIZAL

Lot 48 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 350 sqm
LOT 18 BLK 4, CHELSEA ST., CATALINA1, MISSION HILLS SUBD., MUZON, ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,389,000

Lot 49 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 350 sqm
LOT 13 BLK 4, CEDAR ST. CATALINA 1, MISSION HILLS SUBD., MUZON, ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,389,000

Lot 50 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 250 sqm
LOT 2-1-3, TICZON CMPD HERBAL PARK, P. OLIVEROS, ANTIPOLO CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 645,000

Lot 51 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 170 sqm
LOT 8 BLK 5, CRESTLINE RD., RIDGEMONT EXEC. VILL., SAN ISIDRO, TAYTAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 461,000

Lot 52 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 270 sqm
LOT 4 BLK 2, COR. DALLAS & CAROLINA STS. GREENLAND NEWTON SUBD., BO. NANGKA SAN MATEO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 654,000

Lot 53 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 257 sqm
LOT 1 BLK 16, VOLVO ST. VILLAGE EAST EXEC. HOMES MUNTING DILAO, ANTIPOLO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 684,000

Lot 54 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 204 sqm
LOT 6 BLK 104, PAJERO ST., VILLAGE EAST EXEC. HOMES PH. 3, BRGY. MUNTING DILAO, ANTIPOLO CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 477,000

Lot 55 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 168 sqm
LOT 8 BLK 10, ANDROMEDA HOMES, BO. SAN ISIDRO, ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 296,000

Lot 56 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 72 sqm
Floor Area: 36 sqm
LOT 25 BLK 1, GREENROSE SUBD. PH 3, SAN RAFAEL, RODRIGUEZ
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 232,000

Lot 57 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 252 sqm
Floor Area: 103 sqm
LOT 11 BLK 4, #25 EDWARD VIII ST., KINGSVILLE SUBD., MAYAMOT, ANTIPOLO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,280,000

Lot 58 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 367 sqm
Floor Area: 291 sqm
LOT 3 BLK 13, FLORENS ST. SAN FRANCISCO VILL, MUZON,TAYTAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,856,000

Lot 59 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 330 sqm
Floor Area: 129 sqm
EMERALD ST, FRANCESCA HOMES, CAINTA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,369,000

Lot 60 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 481 sqm
Floor Area: 180 sqm
LOT 7 BLK 19, #22 CRUZEIRO ST, MERALCO SUB, TAYTAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,949,000

Lot 61 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 295 sqm
Floor Area: 187 sqm
LOT 6 BLK 12, # 111 SUNRISE DR, BROKSIDE HILLS SUBD., CAINTA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 912,000

Lot 62 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 206 sqm
Floor Area: 151 sqm
#23 RIAL ST. MERALCO VILLAGE, SAN JUAN, TAYTAY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 871,000

Lot 63 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 150 sqm
Floor Area: 73 sqm
LOT 15 BLK 6, EMERALD ST, PINES CITY ROYALE, ANTIPOLO CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 623,000

Lot 64 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 204 sqm
Floor Area: 182 sqm
LOT 26 BLK 40, #23 LANCIA ST., VILLAGE EAST EXEC HOMES, ANTIPOLO CITY
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,771,000

Lot 65 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 192 sqm
Floor Area: 103 sqm
#32 SUNFLOWER COR MORNING GLORY STS., GREENLAND EXEC VILL PH IV-B, CAINTA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,129,000

Lot 66 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 240 sqm
Floor Area: 192 sqm
LOT 5 BLK 4, 4TH ST., PLEASANT HOMES, STO.NINO, ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 727,000

Lot 67 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 74 sqm
Floor Area: 101 sqm
LOT 21 BLK 2 HOMEPOINT VILL SUBD.SAN ISIDRO ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 551,000

Lot 68 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 74 sqm Floor Area: 42 sqm
LOT 20 BLK 2 HOMEPOINT VILLAGE SUBD.SAN ISIDRO ANGONO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 260,000

Lot 69 - TOWNHSE
Lot Area: 60 sqm Floor Area: 53 sqm
LOT 8 BLK 13, HOUSE MAROON, RICHGATE SUBD, MAMBUGAN, ANTIPOLO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 603,000

VALENZUELA

Lot 70 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 137 sqm
LOT 40 BLK 17, MAIN AVE. COR. 22ND ST., METRO VILLA SUBD., MAPULANG LUPA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 521,000

QUEZON CITY

Lot 71 - LOT ONLY
Lot Area: 300 sqm
LOT 31 BLK 70 YUAN ST., NORTH FAIRVIEW SUBD., PHASE 8
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,212,000

Lot 72 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 352 sqm
Floor Area: 390 sqm
LOT 4 BLK 7, NO. 19 TRINITY ST. MARIES VILL., TANDANG SORA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 5,063,000

Lot 73 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 180 sqm
Floor Area: 99 sqm
LOT 2 BLK 3 RUBY ST. SAN PEDRO 6 TANDANG SORA
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,135,000

Lot 74 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 335 sqm
Floor Area: 302 sqm
L12F1, #2 PONCIANO BERNARDO ST., BAGONG LIPUNAN, CUBAO DIS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 2,010,000

Lot 75 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 329 sqm
Floor Area: 121 sqm
#14 ORANGE ST. ODELCO SUBD. SAN BARTOLOME, NOVALICHES
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,245,000

Lot 76 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 232.7 sqm
Floor Area: 167 sqm
L20 B83, #38 INT J. ZOBEL, DIOQUINO Z.OBEL, PROJECT 4
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,200,000

Lot 77 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 1,010 sqm
Floor Area: 51 sqm
16-A INT FIDELCRUZ ST. TS CRUZ SUBD, NOVALICHES
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,316,000

Lot 78 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 252 sqm
Floor Area: 140 sqm
LOT 4 BLK 4, 15 CHOPIN ST., GREENVILLE SUBD., SAUYO, NOVALICHES
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,360,000

Lot 79 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 181 sqm
Floor Area: 76 sqm
39 SAN IGNACIO ST., BGY. GULOD NOVALICHES
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 732,000

Lot 80 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 447.7 sqm
Floor Area: 205 sqm
NO 21, DON JOSE ST., BRGY SAN ROQUE, CUBAO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 5,500,000

MANILA

Lot 81 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 73.7 sqm
Floor Area: 196 sqm
B14/L1-E, HERBOSA EXT. TONDO
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,215,000

MAKATI CITY

Lot 82 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 324 sqm
Floor Area: 108 sqm
1 PONTE ST M. DELA PAZ SUBD. BRGY SINGKAMAS
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 4,600,000

PASAY CITY

Lot 83 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 174 sqm
Floor Area: 114 sqm
2704 INTERIOR CABRERA ST., (OCHOA COMPOUND) SAN ROQUE
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,169,000

PARANAQUE CITY

Lot 84 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 175 sqm
Floor Area: 192 sqm
LOTS 20 & 21, BLK 1, MATTHEW ST, ANNEX 35, BETTER LIVING SUBD
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 2,312,000

Lot 85 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
Lot Area: 280 sqm
Floor Area: 137 sqm
LOT 61 BLK 13, #68 FC SANTOS ST, BF HOMES PH III
Minimum Bid Price: PhP 1,546,000

SHOW MONEY. PhP25,000.00 CASH, MC or GOLD CREDIT CARD. PLEASE CONFIRM ATTENDANCE TO ENSURE SEATS AND PARKING.
PLEASE CALL CBRE FOR MORE INFORMATION: Tel No. (02) 759-2334; (02) 752-2580 or
TEXT US AND WE WILL CALL YOU: JOJO MIKE 0917-526-0614
visit the web site: www.pnb.com.ph ERIC 0918 939 3580 EARLY 0918 930 6721

CBRE
CB RICHARD ELLIS
AUCTION MANAGER

• • ALL PROPERTIES FOR SALE ARE ON AN "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". PROPERTIES AND PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGES WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. • •

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CAR LOAN

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 3731021

2% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BILLIARDS

Sale/Rental/Service 8014494

PETS

DOG TRAINER 4528681

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

PETS

LonghairedGuineaPig5277616 Less50% on boar 20% on sow

*PUGS*WRINKLED*3725231*

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

YAMAHA GRAND & UPRIGHT
ELITE PIANO CENTER
Almost New.TERMS-7213124

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

WANTED TO BUY

BUY • SELL • PAWN
ROLEX+OTHERS
DIAMONDS/JEWELRY
Repair / Polish Any watch
MANILA WATCH EXCHANGE
Hyatt • 804-0484 / 834-2886
Greenhills • 724-4374

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

WANTED TO BUY

BUYING ROLEX
Other WATCHES, BEST PRICE
0917-8142309 • 7269687
7220433 • 4123543

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

DIAJADE PAWNSHOP
LAS PINAS
METRO MANILA
Will have its auction sale on January 09, 2004. All unredeemed pledges during the month of August 01-31, 2003. Diajade Main - 8:30am Diajade Br.11-11:30am Sons of J. Lanuza-Auctioner (PDI-December 27,2003)

Nuestra-Damus Pawnshop
Makati City
Auction Sale on January 06, 2004 all unredeemed pledges during the month of August 1-31, 2003. Nuestra Br. II Pio-9:30am; Nuestra Br. I 10:30am; Damus Pawnshop-12:30pm; Nuestra Main -1:30pm; Nuestra Br. IX - 3:00pm. Sons of J. Lanuza - Auctioneer

An expanding progressive company
is urgently in need of the following:

ACCOUNTANTS/ACCOUNTING CLERKS/ BOOKKEEPERS/CHEMICAL/ MECHANICAL ENGINEERS/TECHNICIANS/ FEMALE MARKETING ASSISTANT/ SALESMAN/INVENTORY CLERK/ EXECUTIVE/COMPANY DRIVERS

(with more than 10 years driving experience)

Qualifications:

- Preferably with working experience
- Computer literate/familiar with windows and office
- Hardworking, reliable and responsible
- Good moral character, work ethics and pleasing personality
- Proficient in English/Tagalog
- Good oral & written communication skills

Qualified applicant kinly send in your detailed resumé and transcript together with an inexpensive photo to:

Personnel Manager
P.O. Box 380
1502 Greenhills, Metro Manila, Philippines

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on January 8, 2004, 2:00 p.m., at the DBP Head Office Auditorium, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on **CASH BASIS:**

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
REAL ESTATE			
MANILA			
AMD-ML-102	No. 100 Industry Road II cor. Reparo Road, Araneta University Village, Malabon	2,380 m² industrial lot (TCT No. M-21827) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 31,861,300.00
AMD-ML-60B	No. 4 Crestline Road, Blue Ridge Subd., Quezon City	835.5 m² residential lot (TCT No. N-251919) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 8,651,500.00
PF-GST-01	Lot 26 Blk. 1, Quezon's Place, Teoville West, San Dionisio, Parañaque	321 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-150452)	P 1,605,000.00
CAVITE			
AMD-ED-103	Bo. San Jose, Tagaytay City	10,980 m² untitled industrial/residential lot (TD No. 2001-027-01428) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 16,333,300.00
PF-GST-02	Lot 7 Blk. 4, Family Village, Panapaan, Bacoor	240 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-267251)	P 720,000.00
NUEVA ECIJA			
CWB-2	Marawara, Jaen	1,000 m² interior residential lot (TCT No. NT-286889) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 276,000.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers:

892-1566 / 893-7172 or 818-9511 loc. 2218/2252 for Code starting with AMD & PF;
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ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI – December 26 & 27, 2003)

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Office of the President
Republic of the Philippines
CLARK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Clark Special Economic Zone, Pampanga

REVISED REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Clark Development Corporation (CDC) invites interested investors for the:

"PRIVATIZATION OF THE FORMER MIMOSA RESORT ESTATE"

The privatization project intends to seek investors and/or locators who will operate the existing facilities and improvements of the multi-million former Mimosa Resort Estate and further develop it into a prime tourist and recreational destination in Central Luzon for a period of 25 years.

Interested parties are required to present their Letter of Intent (LOI) upon purchase of the eligibility forms and submit their eligibility documents not later than **January 19, 2004** (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at the Office of the SBAC Chairman, Bldg. 2127 C.P. Garcia Street corner E. Quirino Ave., CSEZ, Pampanga.

Eligibility Forms will be issued to the prospective bidder upon payment of a non-refundable fee of TWENTY THOUSAND PESOS (₱20,000.00). The said payment shall cover all the bidding documents including the Eligibility Forms, TOR and other documents. Issuance of the Eligibility Forms shall commence on **January 03 to 12, 2004** (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

Only those who are eligible to bid for the said project shall be issued a TOR and shall be invited to participate and be notified of the schedule of pre-bid conference and the submission and opening of bids thru the issuance of bid bulletins.

CDC reserves the right to reject any or all applications or bids without offering any reason; to waive any formality, informality and/or defect and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government. CDC does not guarantee that an award will be made.

All inquiries and letters shall be addressed to:

SPECIAL BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
c/o VICTOR JOSE I. LUCIANO, CHAIRMAN
Clark Development Corporation
Bldg. 2127, E. Quirino Avenue corner
C.P. Garcia Street, CSEZ
Clark Field, Pampanga

(Sgd.) **VICTOR JOSE I. LUCIANO**
SBAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 27, 2003 & Jan. 3, 2004)

Repubika ng Pilipinas
Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka
PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PAGSASAKA AT PANGINGISDA
(National Agricultural and Fishery Council)
Diliman, Lungsod ng Quezon
Tel. No. 928-87-41 to 65 local 510

Tender No. 2003SEC416(B) (NFDM)-01 *December 23, 2003*

INVITATION TO BID

The National Agricultural and Fishery Council (NAFC) for and in behalf of the National Dairy Authority/Department of Agriculture, hereby invites sealed bids for the sale of 1,192 metric tons (MT) of Non Fat Dry Milk (NFDM) for January 2004 arrival under the US Section 416 (b) Program.

Tender documents can be secured from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), NAFC Apacible Hall, Department of Agriculture Building, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City starting on *December 29, 2003.*

The deadline for submission of the pre-qualification documents shall be on **January 5, 2004.** Pre-qualified bidders shall be notified anytime before closing and opening of bids.

Only fully completed sealed bids from pre-qualified bidders shall be submitted not later than 2:00 p.m. on **January 7, 2004**. Bids received after the scheduled time will not be accepted/entertained and will be returned unopened.

For details, please contact Ms. Paz Ventic or Ms. Peachy Agustin at tel. nos. 928-1966 or 929-8234.

(Sgd.) **DANILO T. ISADA**
Vice Chairman, BAC

(PDI-Dec 27, 2003)

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Ynares Center, Antipolo City

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General Admission	P	150

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"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." Psalm 23:1-2

VIRGILIO "Ver" D. INDIONGCO

Senior Vice President, Equitable PCI Bank
Ateneo de Manila University Class '72
February 29, 1952 – December 26, 2003

He is survived by his wife **NET CHIPONGIAN**; and children **NANETTE VALERIE** and **BERTRAND GIL "Bogie."**

His remains will lie in state at the Faith Chapel, Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City starting 7 p.m. on December 27, 2003.

Interment schedule will be announced later.

EMERLINA "NINA" FELIPE ARTILLAGA

October 14, 1940 – December 25, 2003

Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 25, 2003

Her loving husband **Jose** and bereaved children **Jona & Noel, Angue, Jeric** and **Mina, Jay**; sisters **Lilia** and husband **Jun Avecilla, Emerita Calunsod** (deceased); brothers **Efrain** and wife **Prima Masilungan, Tony** (deceased); grandchildren **Judd, Jose, Maria, Jemica** and **Jarred**; nephews and nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment will be on December 30, 2003 at Pine Grove, Minchinbury, Sydney after the 10 a.m. Mass at St. Aidan Church.

Elsa Bobadilla Allarey

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on December 22, 2003 at the age of 88.

Her bereaved husband, **Adolfo**; children, **Felicitas, Ronald, Waldo** and **Jocelyn**; daughter-in-law **Linda R. Larrazabal**; son-in-law **Lamberto C. Nieves**; grandchildren **Rajah, Rea** and **Moses**; brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Chapel of the Holy Rosary, Quezon Avenue, Lucena City. Interment will take place at the St. Ferdinand Memorial Park on December 30, 2003 after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 2:00 p.m. at the St. Ferdinand's Cathedral.

REV. FR. JOHN EUGENE McSWEENEY, C.SS.R.

Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer Vice-Province of Manila
Died in the Grace of our Lord
on the 26th of December 2003 at the age of 80.

Lies in state at the **Divino Amor Chapel, Lipa City** until Sunday, December 28 and will be transferred to the **National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help,** Baclaran, Parañaque City on Sunday afternoon. The Funeral Mass will be on December 29, 2003, Monday at 9:30 AM.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE

OSCAR TUTANES NAGUIT, M.D.

Peacefully joined our Creator
on December 24, 2003 at the age of 73,

His loving wife ELENA; children JOEL & TERESA, MICHAEL, JESICA & EYMARD; grandchildren BAMBI, ZACHARY, JUSTINE & CHLOE; brothers & sisters CARLOS, LUCILA, ESTRELLA & PEPITO, GENE & GLORIA, RUDY & ERLY and DANNY & PRECY; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the San Felipe Neri Chapel, Mandaluyong City.

Interment will be on Sunday, 28th of December 2003 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED PAPA

ATTY. ARTE DIAZ GUERRERO

Born: August 16, 1928

Who joined our Creator on December 24, 2003
at the age of 75.

His bereaved wife **Priscila**; children, **Joji & Dennis, Aya & Buddy, Margot & Arcy, Boy & Cindy, Timmy & Georgia**; grandchildren, **Jacqui, Deo, David, Yuri, Raisa, Andrei, Stefano, Fima, Kara, Myles, Coco, Chyla, Jairo, Cayt, Miguel & Eka**. Join relatives & friends in prayers for the family.

His remains lie in state at the St. Rita Parish Church, Philam Homes, West Ave., Quezon City.

Cremation will be on 30th December, 1 p.m. at Eternal Gardens, Balintawak.

MAJ GEN DANIEL G LIRA AFP (Ret)

PMA CLASS '51

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on 24 December 2003
at the age of 77.

His bereaved wife **Pat B Lira**; children, **Erwin, Maria, Andrea, Beatriz, Aurora, Armand** and **Daryl**; grandchildren, brother and sisters request the readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His body lies in state at the PNP Mortuary, Camp Crame, Quezon City.

Necrological services will be held at 1900H 27 Dec 03 at the Multi-Purpose Hall, Camp Crame, Q.C.

Interment will be on 281200 Dec 03 at the Libingan Ng Mga Bayani, Ft Bonifacio, Rizal after the 0900 H Mass at the Multi-Purpose Hall, Camp Crame, Q.C.

The Ramos family and members of Notre Dame de Vie Institute (NDV) request you to pray for the eternal repose of the soul of

ROSARIO "MARGARET" RAMOS

who "entered into life" on Christmas Day 2003. Her body lies in state at Notre Dame de Vie Chapel, 123 Susano Road, San Agustin, Novaliches.
Funeral mass will be at 3:00 P.M., December 27 at NDV Chapel.
In lieu of flowers, donation for the construction of
Notre Dame de Vie Spiritual Center for Asia
will be greatly appreciated.

"In peace I shall both lie down & sleep, for you alone, Lord make me secure." Psalm 4:9

EMILIO P. TANZO

Has peacefully joined our Lord on December 23, 2003 at the age of 65

Prayers for his eternal peace and happiness would be appreciated by his family and relatives.

His remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz in Araneta Ave., Quezon City

Cremation will be on December 28, 2003, Sunday, 10:00 a.m. at the La Funeraria Paz Crematory after the celebration of the Holy Mass at 9:00 in the morning

---

DOLORES C. DE LEON

Born: May 31, 1944

Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 25, 2003.

Lovingly remembered by her husband **Armando**; children and in-laws **Susan** and **Leo Casio, Alex** and **Michelle de Leon**, and **Jenette**; grandsons and granddaughter **DJ** and **Mickey de Leon, L.A.** and **Leiann Marie Casio**; sisters **Ligaya, Nene, Baby** and **Angge**; brothers **Nonoy** and **Boy**. Her family and relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Parañaque.

Interment will take place on December 28, 2003 at Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque at 3:00 p.m. after Mass at 1:30 p.m.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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SCIENCE/HEALTH

E-mail: pr_science_health@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**
Assistant Editor **Stella O. Gonzales**

Staying alive and whole in 2004

By Charles E. Buban

DESPITE efforts by the health department to discourage the use of firecrackers during the New Year's Eve revelry, Filipinos still cannot get firecrackers out of their system. But at least fewer are getting maimed each year.

Efforts to reduce the number of injuries resulting from fireworks and firecrackers started in the early 1990s when the DOH started the "Oplan Iwas Paputok" program. Since then, fireworks-related injuries have dramatically decreased every year.

In 2001, there were 1,325 firecracker injuries, down from the 1,567 cases the previous year.

The biggest drop was in 2002, when only 524 cases were reported. This figure dropped further this year, when only 380 cases were reported, or a 27 percent decrease from the previous year.

"Filipinos are becoming more careful. They are using safer (pyrotechnics)," said Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit.

One the concerns of the DOH right now is the use of *watusi* (dancing firecracker), a matchstick-like firecracker that is very popular among little children despite its ban under the Philippine National Police-Firearms and Explosives Division Memorandum dated Jan. 17, 2002.

The seemingly harmless *watusi* is poisonous when ingested by the unsuspecting reveler, usually the young ones.

Watusi is composed of at least four poisonous chemicals:

- Yellow phosphorous, which is extremely toxic and can cause vomiting, stomach cramps, liver, heart, or kidney damage, extreme drowsiness, or death
- Potassium chlorate, which can cause abdominal pain, blue lips or fingernails and skin, convulsions, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, nausea and shortness of breath
- Potassium nitrate, which can cause irritation to the gastrointestinal tract
- Trinitrotoluene, otherwise known as TNT, which is usually found in bombs and can cause liver damage.

The DOH has submitted proposals to amend Republic Act 7183, or "An Act Regulating the Sale, Manufacture, Distribution and Use of Firecrackers and Other Pyrotechnic Devices," which was approved on Jan. 20, 1992.

Dayrit, in a letter to the Liga ng mga Barangay, an organization of 41,939 barangays nationwide, has requested for continuous support and vigilance in the advocacy on "Oplan Iwas Paputok" in their respective localities.

To set the example, Dayrit banned the use of firecrackers in all DOH facilities, including its offices, hospitals and attached agencies. The secretary is instead encouraging people to blow horns and bang tin cans to welcome the New Year.

Bubbly smiles

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

THE JAMES ossuary is back in the news as archeological experts continue to debate its authenticity and whether or not James was the brother of Jesus whose birth is being celebrated this time of year. As this question is one that will most likely never be definitively answered, I prefer to focus my attention on research concerning another important figure during the holidays: Santa Claus.

I don't remember seeing him mingling with the toys dancing and marching around the perimeter of a department store I could've sworn was Anson's but which my mother insists was COD.

Instead, Santa Claus was a character who was heard-but-never-seen on cassette tapes of "Christmas Eve in Sesame Street" and the Chipmunks' heart-warming and helium-induced drama about Alvin and his Golden Echo harmonica.

Indifferent to Santa

This brings me to the research done by Prof. John Trinkaus of the Zicklin School of Business at Baruch College during the early weeks of December. He went to two malls and a department store in New York and watched the faces of the children waiting to sit on Santa's lap.

Out of the 330 children he observed, only five seemed excited and delighted to see the man in the red suit. Fifty-three children didn't look as though they were sure they wanted to be there, and nine children were terrified of being anywhere near Santa. The rest of the children, Professor Trinkaus reported, looked "indifferent."

He later added that "in the store, most children were indifferent. There might have been a little more happiness here than in the shopping malls, but to say that is perhaps a stretch."

Professor Trinkaus, by the way, is this year's recipient of the Ig Nobel Prize for Literature for meticulously collecting data and publishing more than 80 detailed academic reports about "specific annoyances and anomalies of daily life."

Case in point: a look at societal preference in wearing baseball caps with the bill facing in front or behind.

For the Santa study, Professor Trinkaus admitted that his observations may be biased and subject to interpretation as he didn't really know what each child was thinking of at the time.

The most interesting part of the study though, is that most of the parents who brought their children were happy and excited, possibly at the thought of establishing a family tradition where their kids would remember talking to Santa Claus before they were too old to believe that he brings them presents each year.

Tiny bubbles

Because of these parents, the rest of the column will be focused on that all-important beverage for New Year celebrations: champagne.

A new study that appears in the Dec. 17 issue of the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry reports that smaller bubbles rising in champagne pick up more flavor and aroma molecules and carry them to the surface, which makes the drink more flavorful and more aromatic, and thus better.

The research was done, not surprisingly, by a Frenchman in the Champagne region of France. His name is Gérard Liger-Belair, an associate professor at the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne in France who also happens to be a consultant for champagne makers Möet and Chandon, which company I always associate with a Queen song. (Incidentally, in case anyone wondered, Möet and Chandon did not fund this research.)

Bubbles of different sizes

Carbonation, or how carbon dioxide dissolves into liquid, is responsible for the bubbles you find in drinks such as sparkling water, soda and beer.

Liger-Belair took equal amounts of champagne, sparkling wine, beer, soda and sparkling water and measured the carbon dioxide concentration in each glass. He was surprised to find out that although sparkling wine and champagne had equal amounts of carbon dioxide, bubble sizes differed greatly.

This led him to conclude that bubble size must not be wholly dependent on carbon dioxide levels but on other chemicals such as minerals and salts in the beverage. The search is now on to find out exactly how bubbles are formed in champagne and, knowing that, how to make them smaller.

What have we learned from all these?

Christmas is not about Santa Claus, holiday family traditions are important, and champagne bubbles aren't made by carbon dioxide alone. I suggest we focus on the second idea and remember that celebrating the holidays is about being with the family in mind and in spirit, if not in body.

Recharging emotional and spiritual batteries

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

(First of two parts)

THE CHRISTMAS break is a good chance to exit for a while from the fast pace in life's superhighway and take stock of ourselves. The year's challenges and stresses generally put a great toll on our lives that can drain not only our physical, but more importantly, our emotional and spiritual energies.

How long has it been since you've laughed out loud or went into uncontrollable giggles? When was the last time you drove to the beach or even just took a walk at the promenade on Roxas Boulevard? Can you still remember when you did nothing without feeling guilty that you should have been doing something?

We work 40 to 50 hours a week, more than 2,000 hours a year. Our hectic lifestyle is undoubtedly wearing us down. Life's daily tasks can exhaust us rather than empower us.

Sometimes, we reach a point when we're tired of being tired and we just have to recharge. Going to the movies, partying with friends and relatives, or even doing some acts of charity may provide a quick charge, but the energy provided may not last long.

Some call this the total fatigue phenomenon, and it happens to everyone whether one realizes it or not.

It's best to recognize it when one is still "low-bat"—when one's "batteries" have not completely conked out. One can still send a message or probably make a quick call for help. But when the battery is completely drained, one might not be in any position to call for help.

According to Dr. John Powers, we know we've hit a wall, emotionally and perhaps spiritually, when we experience the following:

- Work becomes a chore and not a joy.
- People we deal with are interruptions and irritations instead of emotionally lifting appointments.
- We become short-tempered with people who are close to us.
- We feel weak morally.
- We go through the motions of our work instead of being passionate.
- We have no energy, no interest, no initiative in almost anything.
- Our mind is a television channel that has gone off the air!
- We don't have time for dear family and friends.

The more of the above we feel, the more urgent the need to drop everything, reassess our lives and our priorities. It's time to recharge.

Ateneo soars in programming fest

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

(First of two parts)

IMAGINE five hours of continuous problem solving: designing, debugging, calculating amid the best college programmers in Asia. Imagine wrestling with eight problems involving isomorphic graphs, cube search, subgroups, incenter, data parsing, Dijkstrata's algorithm, among other puzzlers.

More than 200 students from Asia gathered at the University of Asia and the Pacific last Nov. 7 for the regional level of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Intercollegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) and raced against the clock and each other "in a battle of logic, strategy and mental endurance."

The ICPC started in 1970 at Texas A & M, and soon evolved into a multitier competition, with headquarters at Baylor University. Participation grew annually, and in 1997 IBM became a sponsor.

Today the contest involves tens of thousands of students from more than 1,300 universities in more than 65 countries. They interact with their peers and sharpen their problem-solving and teamwork skills.

The ICPC bills itself as "the oldest, largest, and most prestigious programming contest in the world" where industry, academe and media focus on the next generation's most promising programming problem-solvers.

Elimination rounds

Joining the ICPC is grueling, to say the least. The first level is local, where universities choose their teams. Some teams then join preliminary contests, whose winners advance to the regional level. Regional contests are held around the world from September to December, and top scorers advance to the World Finals (to be held in Prague, Czech Republic in March 2004). A university can field many teams, but each team should have at most three members.

I am proud to say that this year the Philippines had its best ranking in the ICPC regionals—two teams from Ateneo de Manila University placed in the top 10.

Allan Espinosa, Mark Punzalan and Charles Yeung placed fifth, and Joshua Agarrado, Rene Ruselle Santos and Aileen Dy placed eighth. Two other teams (Steven Ang, Miguel Arguelles and Neill Li; Mary Louise Lim, Ramon Mejia and Lerrizah Uy) got honorable mentions.

Some teams from other universities also got honorable mentions, a rich harvest for our country.

Aside from Ateneo, the other Top 10 teams were from the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Donghua University, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Parahyangan University, Bina Nusantara University, Zhejiang University of Technology, University of Aizu and Tongji University.

Sample question

What were the questions like? The simplest (and shortest) this year is titled "Baby Huey's coins and trays."

Baby Huey's obsession was circles. Today he discovered his Papa's coin collection and his Mama's set of trays. He devised a game: to arrange a circle of coins of the same type along the inner rim of one of his Mama's trays. He would do this without filling in the space formed by the circle of coins.

No one knows why baby Huey likes playing this game, but Mama and Papa were secretly pleased that Baby Huey had started to apply his counting skills. Baby Huey would try to guess the number of coins he could fit in the tray.

Play along with Baby Huey in his simple game. Use your computer to predict the number of coins he can fit into each tray. Write a program that will take in the radius t of a tray and the radius c of a coin (same units, both integers). The output of this program should be the number of coins that can line the inner rim of the tray.

For the solution, Ateneo coach Dr. Pablo Manalastas gives a hint: There are three cases: $c > t$, $t/2 < c <= t$ and $c <= t/2$. The last case requires a simple trigonometric formula.

Other problems involve determining whether supposedly different graphs represent the same organic compounds (isomorphism), arranging letters to form words (cube search), finding the intersection of the angle bisectors of a triangle (the incenter), building a specified database (data parsing).

According to Dr. Manalastas, the most difficult problems for most teams involved generating the subgroups of a finite group (a topic in abstract algebra which becomes easier for people well-versed in the subject), the shortest path problem, and isomorphisms of 3-D domino pieces. (Go to http://icpc.baylor.edu/icpc/Regionals/Manila03 to view the problems).

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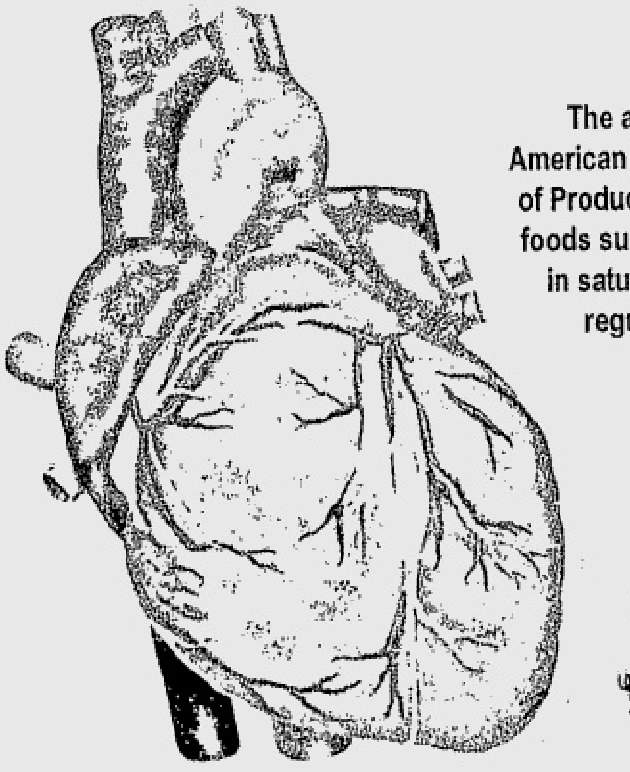

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Debt payments wipe out gov't savings

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration is left with only P5 billion in savings on interest payments as of November and substantial debt payments this month could wipe out the savings, according to National Treasurer Sergio Edeza.

From January to October, the government was able to save P9.9 billion on interest payments on foreign and domestic borrowings compared to what it had budgeted during the period.

Edeza said that interest payments on foreign and local debts have piled up in the last two months of the year.

In the last two weeks of November, about P62 billion worth of government securities fell due while this month, about P30 billion in treasury bills and bonds were to mature.

Edeza said the savings on interest payments were achieved on the back of low domestic interest rates amid the volatile political situation.

Even as yields on treasury bills and bonds widened since the July 27 mutiny, he said the increases remained manageable. In fact, the benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate ended the year at 6.532 percent against the government average forecast of 8-9 percent.

This year, the government hadsset aside P230.7 billion for interest payments but it was banking on favorable domestic rates to bring the level down like it did last year when a substantial decline in local rates reduced debt servicing by P18.5 billion.

A better grip on the fiscal sector allowed the government to contain the budget deficit at P172.2 billion or P17.5 billion lower than P189.7-billion target in the first 11 months.

Edeza said that despite political uncertainties that could have pushed domestic interest rates up, the cost of government borrowing from the local market had stayed reasonable.

He credited the government's ability to keep the budget deficit in check for the continued increase in savings.

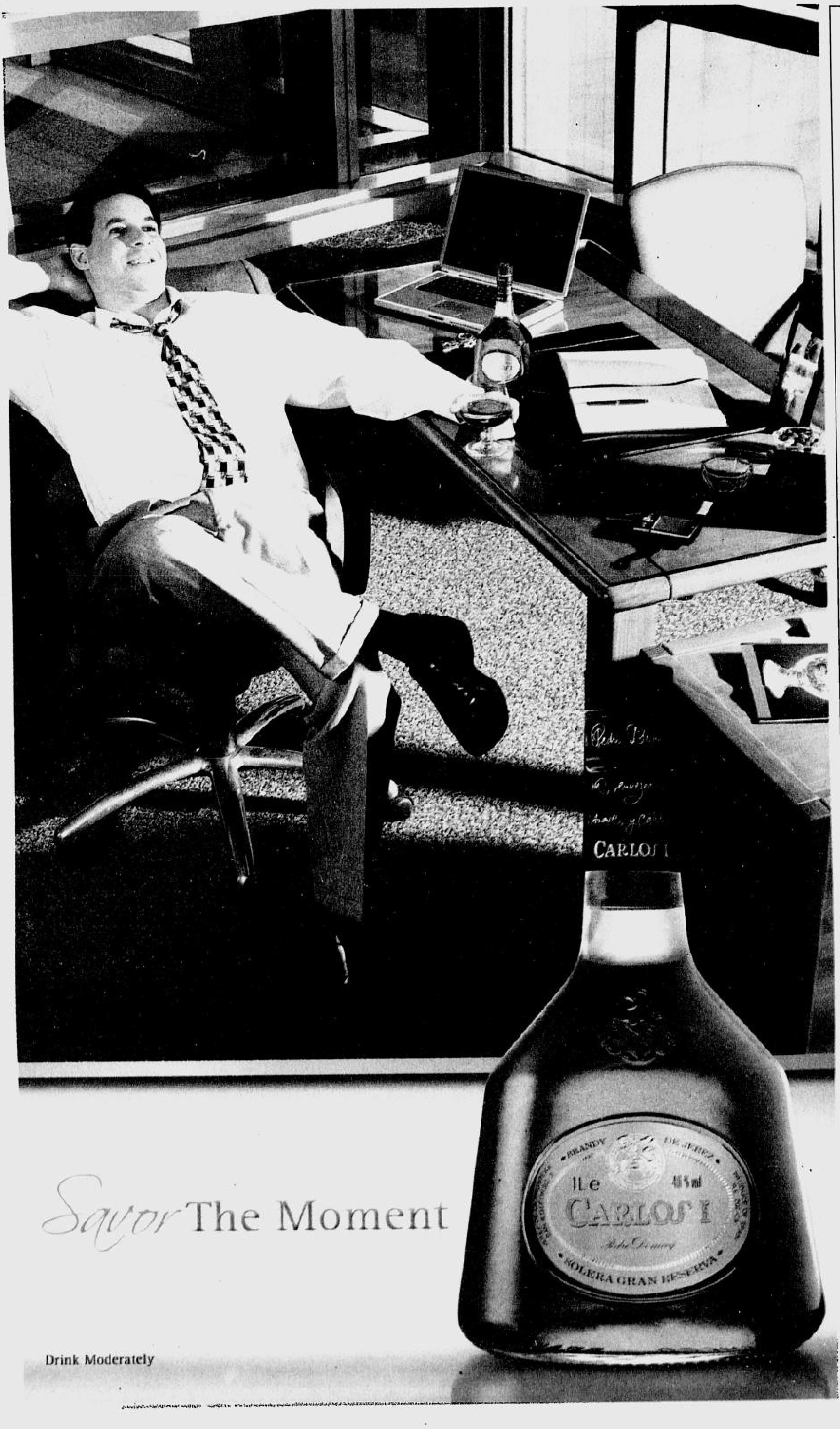
A deficit on track tends to bring down domestic rates as the investment risks decline, leaving the market little justification to push rates up, he explained.

Savings from interest payments are often used to offset increases in spending, especially as expenditures exceeded the goal from July to October. In November, however, the government tightened on disbursement and spent about P7 billion lower than the ceiling.

Edeza said the budget deficit this year would not reach the P200-billion mark against the target of P202 billion and last year's fiscal gap of P210.7 billion.

Next year, the government said it would keep the deficit within the P197.8- billion target although borrowings from the local market are expected to increase.

In the first quarter of 2004, the Treasury said the government would issue P4.5 billion worth of bonds weekly and P11 billion worth of bills every other week.



Rotary Club of Makati Urdaneta Savors The Moment with Carlos I

MEMBERS of the Rotary Club of Makati Urdaneta had good reason to savor the holiday season as they were treated to a night filled with music, dance and sensuous brandy rituals courtesy of the finest Spanish brandy from the House of Domecq, Carlos I.

The Carlos I brandy appreciation night was held at Monk's Dream bar in Rockwell, Makati. Rotarians bore witness to what it truly meant to savor a moment as they learned from Don Beltran Domecq himself the heritage of Carlos I, the Solera system of brandy production and the novel way of appreciating brandy with chocolates. Undoubtedly Spanish in theme, guests were treated to a night of the best Bossa Nova / Samba music in Manila courtesy of Ms. Eileen Sison, brand ambassadress of Carlos I, and the Guarana band.

The Rotary Club of Makati Urdaneta is one of the more influential clubs in Makati. Seen appreciating a glass of Carlos I were Makati City Administrator Nick Santiago, Governor of Oriental Mindoro Rod Valencia, Ambassador Roy Senerez, Atty. Noel Laman, Atty. Mario Ongkiko, dance maven Becky Garcia and the beautiful Rotary President Ms, Celia Cuasay.

Each Rotarian received the Carlos I brandy glass snifter and the official Carlos I mini-handbook on brandy as mementos of the event.

FROM left to right: Carlos I senorita Kristine, Brand Manager Chris Lazaro, Atty. Noel Laman, Carlos I senoritas Sarah and Rachel and Rotary President Celia Cuasay.

MEMBERS of the Rotary Club of Makati Urdaneta toast to the success of Carlos I.

ROTARIANS savor the moment with Carlos I.

MEMBERS of the Rotary Club of Makati Urdaneta savor the moment with Carlos I.

ADVT

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Think 1970s—and smile

By Marge C. Enriquez

I WAITED until the 11th hour to write this issue's editorial. The number of pages would determine the final mix of the stories and the tone of this essay.

If you're wondering why ÉLAN is down to four pages from 16 last Dec. 13, it's because newspapers and magazines normally thin out from mid-December to January. Advertising, which contributes to the number of pages, goes on a holiday, too. The expansion and contraction of editorial content and advertisement is part of the newspaper's normal cycle. Don't worry, the entire newspaper will fatten up again in 2004.

Stories in this issue reflect the perspective of baby boomers. On one hand, the forward-looking ones embrace introspection and alternative lifestyles, which is the trend in the Zeroes; and on the other, partyphiles remember a bygone era of glamour, fun and hedonism.

Self-awareness

I rang up **Regina Paz Lopez**, president of the ABS-CBN Foundation, one night.

"She's meditating," the maid said.

To me that sounded pretty cool—and unusual. Whenever I call up people in their homes and they can't pick up, it's usually because they're having dinner, taking a shower, or sleeping.

Gina, as she is known to friends, is a product of the '70s Age of Enlightenment. Today she practices a meditation technique taught by French lecturer **Samuel Sagan**, who will visit Manila next month to hold workshops.

"I've tried the whole gamut of methods—from Ananda Marga, Siddha Yoga, Zen, Raja Yoga but this one is really amazing," she says.

Her journey started when she took up a workshop in San Francisco on creating sacred spaces, given by **Karen Kingston**. Gina wanted to know how to improve the flow of energies in her home for a peaceful atmosphere. In a one-on-one session, Kingston said Gina might want to look into Clairvision in Australia.

Gina thus went to New South Wales to meet Sagan. Since their first encounter, she's been hooked on his techniques which, she says, enabled her to focus—something she could not achieve in the 30 years that she's been practicing meditation.

"He has helped me in giving talks and how to connect with the audience on a deeper level. When I talk to people, I actually listen," she enthuses.

Gina's essay celebrates her milestone two ways—she's 50 today.

'C Party'

Say "party" and think 1970s and '80s, when people dressed up to express themselves. Nowadays, one has to consider several times which clothes and makeup colors wouldn't be rendered washed out by digital camera lighting and misregistering of the printing press.

Design consultant **Jim Tan** recalls that bygone era of the "C Party"—Caviar, Chocolates, Cannabis and Cocaine. Shabu was snubbed in those affairs. Totally un-chic.

Tan was a member of the "Makati Orchids" that organized the Caviar and Chocolate Parties in Bel-Air. The highlight of the decor was the tablescape, usually done by fashion designer-turned-interior design consultant **Chito Vijandre**. Tan recounts that in one Japanese theme party, three huge bonsais sat atop a three-inch carpet of rare statis flowers. The bonsai trees were adorned with 100 preserved butterflies to look like blooms from afar!

In another party, the group created a crepe paper maze that had different pathways leading to the party area, the bar and the buffet table. Champagne, flown in by stewardess-friends, was free flowing.

Before the house was renovated, people would mistake the pond for dark marble and fall into the pond. Talk about dramatic entrances. At the end, guests would be sprawled on the floor, intoxicated by, uh, high spirits.

"We were younger," said Tan (take note, all boomers will insist they remain young, even after 55). "We were enjoying our newfound status and expressing our glamour."

Glow in the dark

You have only Dec. 29 and 30 to catch at Onstage Greenbelt the first-ever full-length black light production in the Philippines. Costumes and props in fluorescent colors are manipulated by black-clad dancers to create movement patterns.

Conceived and directed by **Douglas Nierras**, "Glow" is about a worm that is looking for its identity. He is led from one creature to another until he meets the Elder Swirls who tells him to have faith in himself. Like the ugly duckling who went into hibernation and emerged a swan, Glow spins into a cocoon and becomes a butterfly.

This story is timeless, being a metaphor for our search for self-awareness. We are often shown different paths but the answer is inside ourselves.

The challenge for the dancers is to manipulate their costumes and props while moving to tongue-in-cheek music, such as "Age of Aquarius," "Oye Como Va," and '80s pop music. When Glow meets the Swirls, the music turns mystically Indian.

For a climax, there is the dramatic transformation of Glow, who is lifted on a harness to punctuate the unfurling of butterfly wings and a shower of confetti.

Exactly the way a soul unfolds and revels in spirituality!

what's inside
now c2
never again c3

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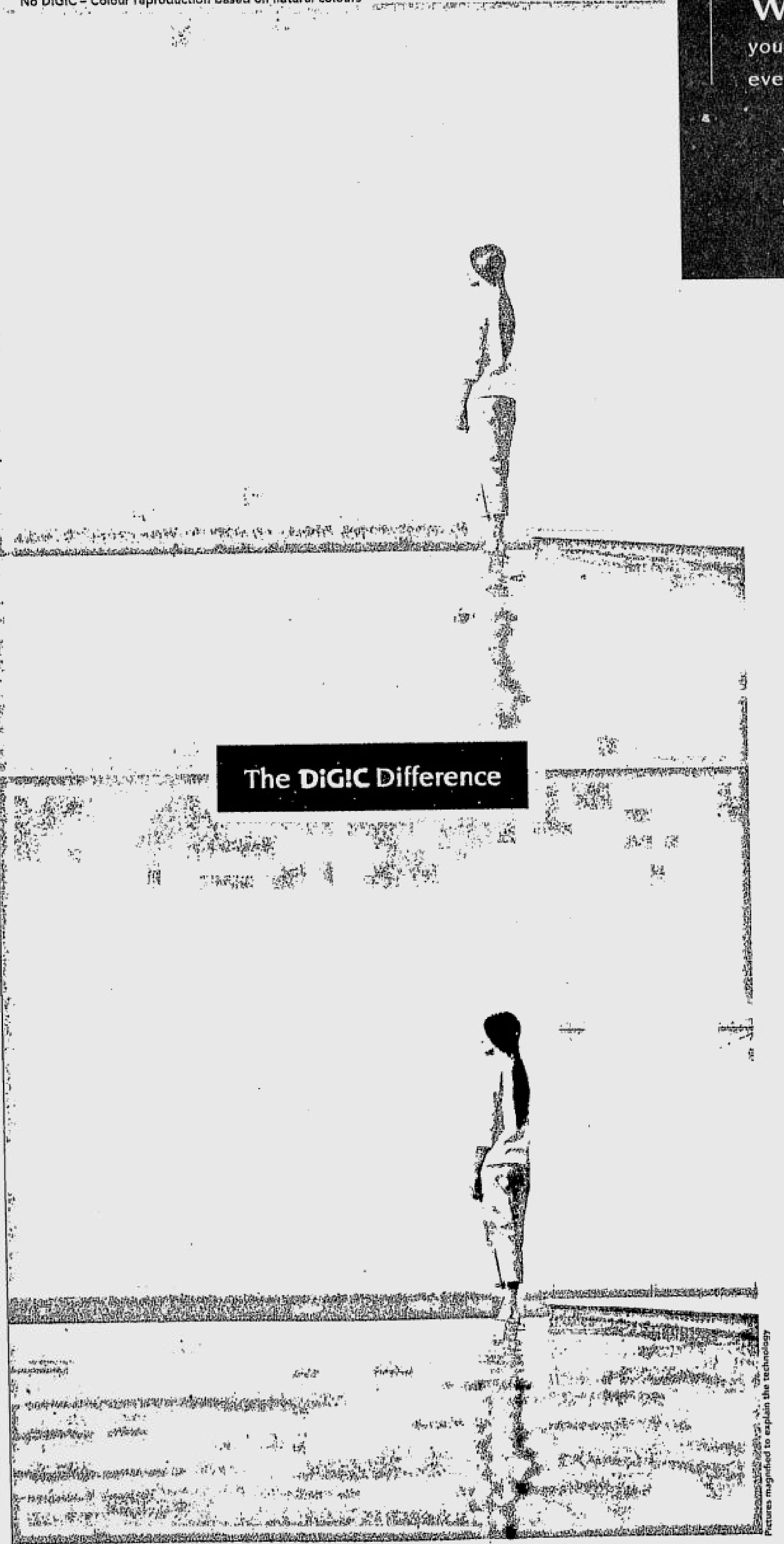
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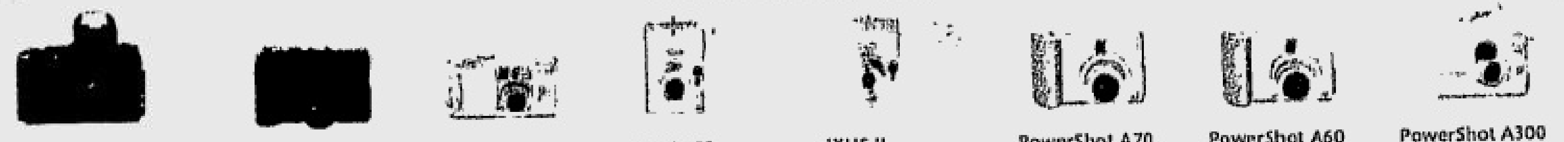

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Spinel Sapphire Season

Photos by Bobot Meru
Pictorial direction by Antonio Salac Santos

TO reach a wider market base, jeweler Hans Brumann teamed up with a Filipino-Chinese partner and created a checkbook-friendly product range. Hemm by Hans Brumann caters to the middle and upper class market. This season he launches the spinel to complement his sapphire collection.

"Every year, I come up with stones to introduce to the local market," Brumann says. The spinel is touted as the great imposter of gemstone history because it resembles other precious stones. "Although it is affordable, it is unknown here," the jeweler notes.

Many famous rubies in crown jewels are actually spinel. The ruby could be replaced with the red spinel in the same way that the diamond could be replaced by the cubic zirconia. The Black Prince's Ruby, a 17-carat spinel, highlights the Imperial State Crown among the British Crown Jewels. Queen Elizabeth now owns the Timur Ruby, a 352-carat red spinel that used to belong to Mughal emperors.

The spinel is a precious mineral, a magnesium aluminum oxide, found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. The red spinel has a richness similar to the ruby's, but it costs only a third of the latter's price. Its value is determined by its intensity, or lack of black-ish overtones. Discovered in the same deposits, the spinel and the ruby share similar chemical properties, luster, and hardness and the same coloring agent, chromium.

Spinels can also be made into imitation birthstones, as they come in the colors yellow and orange, and also violet, which resembles amethyst. The pink spinel may look like tourmaline, topaz or rose quartz. The blue spinel resembles the zircon and topaz. The cobalt blue variety is the rarest and is sought after by collectors. Although they are clearer than the ruby, even the best spinels will have some fractures and crystals.

Sapphire needs no introduction in these parts. A relative of the ruby, it is a form of the mineral corundrum. Color, more than clarity, determines its value. The best and most valuable colors are violet-blue and highly saturated dark and medium tones.

The sapphire is known as a symbol of truth, sincerity and faithfulness. Moses was said to have been given the Ten Commandments on tablets of sapphire. The British Crown Jewels are full of large blue sapphires, symbol of pure and wise rulers. Since Prince Charles gave Lady Diana a sapphire engagement ring, many grooms-to-be all over the world have followed the tradition.

At Hemm, Brumann innovates—sometimes by using three different colors of sapphires in one setting, or a gradation of shades from pink to mauve to light blue, or by introducing rare sapphires from Kashmir, which are already close to extinction. He maintains his characteristic geometric designs by setting sapphires on square white gold with square princess-cut diamonds. He feels that white gold complements blue sapphire.

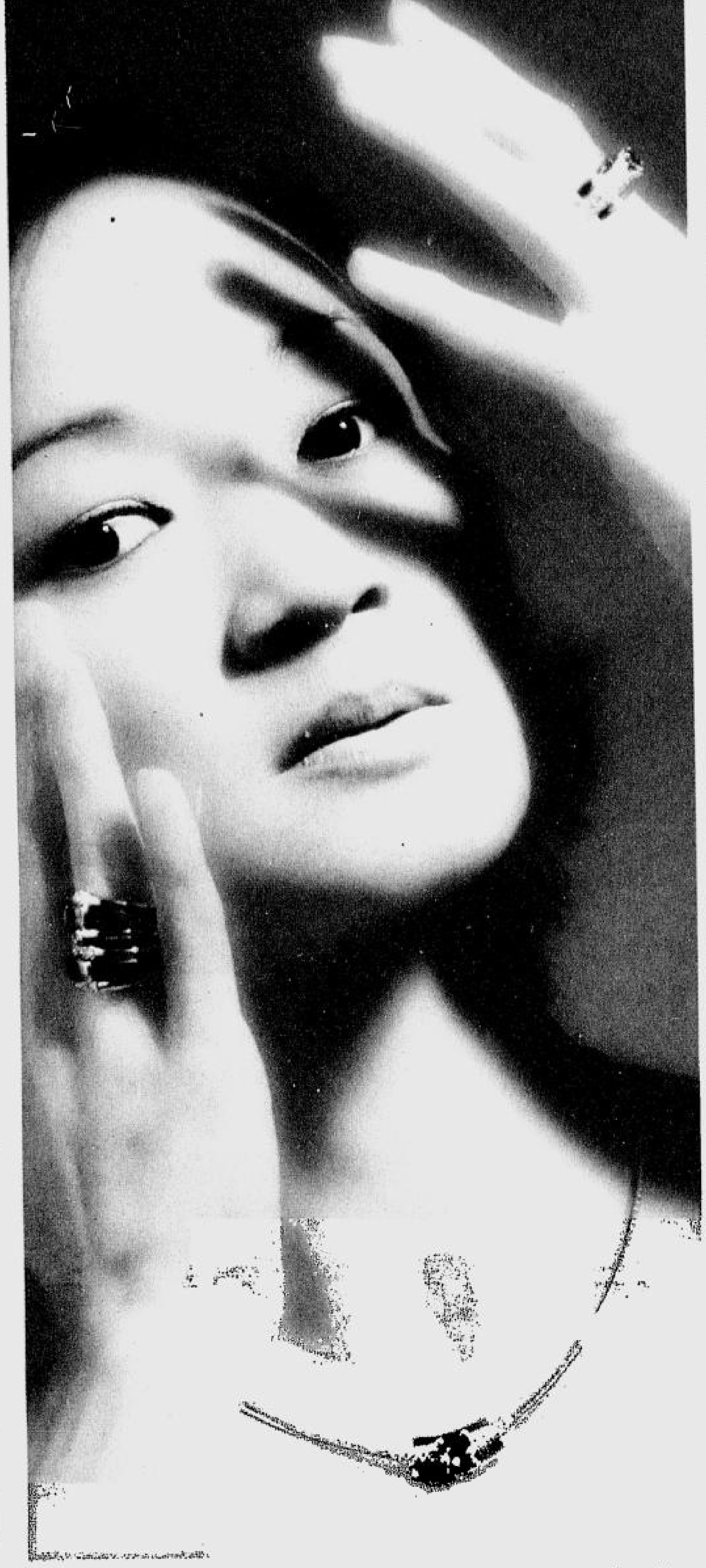
"Mixing blue with yellow gold disturbs the harmony. Yellow gold goes better with red stones," he says.

He can also go classic. For instance, a white gold bracelet set in grid pattern is interspersed with multi-colored sapphires in leaf designs and baguette diamonds.

Occasionally, he goes over the edge with the spinels by setting them on an organic-shaped, crisscross ring or *kamagong* ring or on a bracelet curved like the human spine.

Hemm Stores are located at Rockwell Power Plant Mall and The Podium.

Model: Maritoni Rufino Tordesillas
Hair and makeup: Angelo Justin
MAKEUP: KISS & MAKE-UP PIPAY



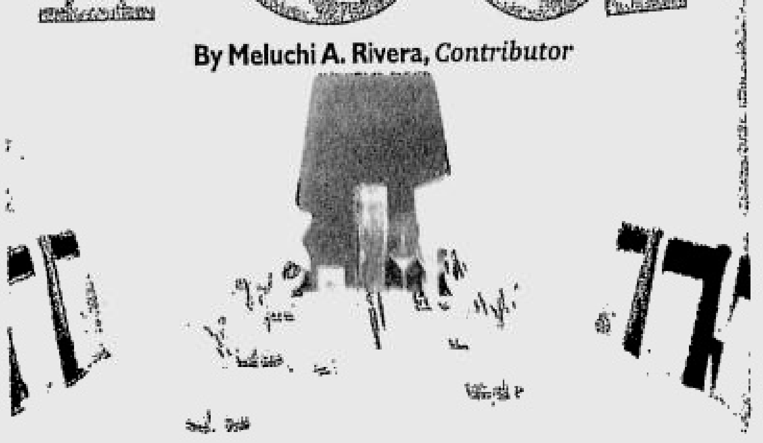
BLACK AND BLUE. Square and rectangular blue spinels on *kamagong* wood rings with matching spinel neckpiece

TICKLED PINK. Heart-shaped cabochon sapphire

CONTEMPORARY CHIC. Rubber choker with spinel pendants

Seeing red

By Meluchi A. Rivera, *Contributor*



GOING POSTMODERN. Philip Starcke red, high-back chair adds quirkiness to the white tones. Other modern elements are spot lights, sculpted glass napkins and an Art Deco wall with stucco paintings accented with bold red strokes

More than revamping the menu, Makati Shang's fine dining restaurant entailed shedding an image

DINING nowadays involves more senses than the palate alone. Restaurants serve up dishes in an ambience that aims for a full visual, auditory and tactile experience as well.

Thus the transformation of the Shangri-la Makati's classically French Cheval Blanc into red (spelled in lower case but typed in bigger fonts), a sleek bar and restaurant that serves fusion cuisine, was anything but straightforward. It meant more than revamping the menu; it entailed shedding an image and (more important, from a business sense) seducing new patrons—not necessarily younger, but definitely the more youthful, hip, chic set.

And so gone are the heavy brocade drapery, the gold and black walls, the stiff formal table settings, the imperious dress code. The bare windows now offer a view of the surrounding lush foliage and allow maximum daylight to play up the palette of pristine white walls shot with accents of tawny beige, black and red. Where before there was heavy reliance on gilt for glitter, red's bar and dining area now sparkles with Art Deco glass touches on walls, countertops, vases and table settings. A few French dining chairs have been retained, but are now complemented by plush, Philippe Starck-inspired high-backed seats in the restaurant's signature color.

The ambient noise has been replaced as well—previously classical music, now one discerns fusion jazz. Where once Cheval Blanc's ambiance evoked warmth, now, as red, the setting suggests cool.

Chilled beef

red's menu has likewise been lightened up, courtesy of Filipino sous chef Jojo Borlagdan, whose style shuns overly elaborate dishes in favor of unpretentious (but still premium) fare. The result is a lean and mean menu, a mere handful of choices for starters, soups, entrees and desserts. Borlagdan, in collaboration with executive chef Christopher Romine, went to town with recipes that showcase red ingredients—red meat, red fruits and red seafood. As we are to find out during our meal, even the salad greens are red.

Seafood dishes dominate the list of signature dishes, among these the crab prepared two ways (soft-shell and red deviled crab cake), the clam chowder (Romine's own recipe), and the slipper lobster entrée. But make no mistake, the *piece de resistance* is the chilled beef featured on the grill list.

Chilled beef? Imagine meat that gets to your plate without ever having been frozen. The process of keeping the meat in a controlled temperature from slaughter, through aging, portioning, individual vacuum-packing and air shipment is so tedious that only the highest-quality meat goes through this treatment. Needless to say, it is the best cut of steak available anywhere, and red is the only restaurant to offer it in the country.

Moment of truth

Primed for an encounter with this true carnivorous treat, I order the starter of salmon sashimi with red prawn tempura, drizzled with wasabi soy vinaigrette, which provides an interesting play of textures. The raw salmon, at once cold and soft, contrasting with the hot and crunchy prawn tempura (indeed, the crunchiest tempura batter I've had) makes for a supremely satisfying dish. Across the table, I spy the crispy oyster starter (which must be crisp indeed, judging from my tempura) disappearing quickly into my husband.

The moment of truth has come, and we avidly peruse red's meat line. Would it be the chilled New York strip, 12 ounces of bovine flown in twice monthly from the United States? Or the eight-ounce cut of chilled beef fillet? For the truly ravenous, there is also the 16-ounce cut of US prime rib-eye on the bone, so vast that it nearly overflows from red's 12-inch plates.

I admit to being less than famished and wimp out by ordering the six-ounce Australian chilled beef fillet. Our entrées arrive quickly, served by the sleek and stylized wait staff of waif-ish female twentynothings (or so they appear to me). We are provided menacing steak knives that look more like hunting daggers, but really, red's staff needn't have bothered, for the meat, while being crisp-seared on the outside, is exquisitely tender and yields to the slightest cutting pressure.

My steak is a tad overdone for medium rare, but it is moist, and it sits on my plate plump and ripe—two words that do not usually come to mind when discussing meat. While the texture of my beef fillet is indeed melt-in-your mouth, the taste is quite mild and Filipinos may need to add any of the three recommended sauces—green peppercorn, mushroom, or béarnaise. I have mine with dollops of café de Paris, or herbed creamed butter. My husband graciously lets me try his New York strip, which reveals itself to be superior in terms of flavor and texture. The price difference is worth it.

Not to be overlooked are the side dishes, which are no wallflowers. One can choose from 10 sidings, and if my creamed spinach and skillet-roasted mushrooms are any indication, they should each pack a mean flavorful punch.

Memorable sweet

Choosing dessert is taken out of our hands by Chef Romine, who serves up the outlet's strawberry soup, and the bento box sampler of four red desserts. The bento box has miniature portions of Philadelphia cheesecake, a molten Valrhona chocolate cake, a raspberry sorbet and another serving of fresh fruits. The sorbet and fresh fruits are refreshing; and while the cheesecake and chocolate cake are rich, they are not cloyingly sweet.

But the most memorable of the lot is the strawberry soup, a glorious ode to red as it features a generous scoop of strawberry sorbet swimming in crimson slush. Adding drama is the sugar "crown" that holds cuts of fresh berries and fruits in season. It is tart and light, perfect for invigorating a body weighed down by the heavy meal.

Perhaps the most welcome change in red's unveiling is its price points, which is very reasonable for a hotel outlet's, especially considering the portion sizes and quality of ingredients. Romine reveals that they are running red like a freestanding restaurant, looking to the dining outlets at the nearby Greenbelt as their main competition.

Judging from the number of diners during our visit, the transformation has gone over quite well. We learn that since opening on Nov. 18, the restaurant has averaged about 60 covers for lunch, and 100 covers for dinner. The overflow crowd has been kept happy by the bar's inventive snack and cocktail menu (which of course includes an extensive red wine list). And yes, nearly half of the patrons are there for the steak.

PARTY LIKE NEVER AGAIN

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos from Oskar Atendido Collection

BABY boomers wax nostalgic when they talk about the party scene in the 1970s and '80s.

Unlike the parties of their parents' generation (circa '50s to '60s) characterized by glamour and that famous Martial law phrase "ostentatious display of wealth," parties in the '70s until the early '80s were characterized by individualism and good clean fun and, I daresay, the literal coming out of the closet of the "Power Gays" and fag hags.

In the '50s and '60s, organizers Luis Araneta, Chito Madrigal and Conching Sunico dominated the party scene on account of their unusual themes, grand scale, gourmet menus (there were no five-star hotels yet) and A-list guests. In the '70s and '80s, the fun parties were organized by Ado Escudero, Louie Cruz (famous for the "walk-in-crawl-out parties"), Ernest Santiago and his Coco Banana group.

Designer Helena Carratala-Guerrero of the progressive label Azabache and her creative team defined the lifestyle of the '70s when they broke conventions. Guerrero's parties were not only theatrical; they also set fashion trends.

Oskar Atendido, a member of her team, describes the parties as "unabashed" and "fantasy driven." They were special because they didn't have the artifice of today's parties. Guests were a motley group of artists and close friends who were "wacky" and "lightheaded."

"Our group rebelled against conventions like the *banat* (severe) hairdo, people came in tattered jeans," he says. Homosexuality used to be a big taboo. In these parties, not only was being gay chic; but it was also acceptable to bring partners. Wine was a novelty in that era of gin and beer.

Bambang chic

Those theme parties coincided with the world's fascination for Yves St. Laurent's fantasy look. Atendido recalls that when the parties had themes from India, Arabia and China, the clothes would soon be translated into Azabache collections that became bestsellers at SM. Atendido says the team discovered old Chinese robes and fabrics from stores in Chinatown at bargain prices. They dug up crocheted tops and sharkskin pants in Bambang flea market, and wore these to the parties.

"The Biggie Look started from those oversized shirts in Bambang," he says.

One of Helena's most unforgettable events was the Tara party, inspired by "Gone with the Wind," which had a rerun in the mid-'70s. The party was held in Guerrero's house in San Juan. "There was no prior talk of dressing up in *mujer* (drag), but the all gays showed up in hoopskirts," says Atendido. The Scarlett O'Hara wannabes came in matching headdresses and crinolines. Waiters were painted in black and dressed up as Nubian slaves. Madrigal Singers performed in turn-of-the-century costumes. Director Butch Perez set up a corner to photograph everybody's quirks. To evoke the laid-back lifestyle of Southern plantations, the guests took off their costumes, leaving only their bloomers on, and lazed around in the garden.

Unparalled

To this day, nothing has topped the Wallpaper-style party that Helena organized in a four-storey home owned by the Guerreros in Pasay City. Everyone was tasked to decorate a room in one day. Helena made arrangements with antique furniture dealer Viring de Asis. Designer Imok Roa created an Egyptian Room with a beige and aqua color theme. Atendido furnished Sleeping Beauty's room with a romantic four-poster bed and rich drapery; Tirso Umali made up the Opium Den with an opium bed, naturally, and Chinese accoutrements and brocade curtains, and it was painted in amber and dark red. The live band played in the living area which, was transformed into a medieval courtyard that was decked with dragons and gargoyles, fake masonry and spider webs for a gothic effect. Ruben Nazareth created a Mourning Room, furnished only with a child's coffin, scissors and a comb.

"The feeling was macabre," says *artiste* Dennis Tan. "The whole house was like that of Dr. Moreau's."

If one were to put together another a.m. decorate/p.m. party of that caliber today, one would have to write sponsorship letters to suppliers, promise media values, and impress them with a power guest list.

"We didn't like the idea of being in the papers," says Atendido. "Mara Pardo de Tavera would avoid photographers."

"Everybody had their own drama," adds Tan.

"Being wacky was different then," says Atendido. "There was glamour and attitude: I don't care what other people say, I am what I am."

HELENA as a Spanish *maja* with Nestor Torre and Elvira Manahan.

CLASS act non pareil. Helena Carratala Guerrero (right) acts out her fantasy as Scarlett O' Hara. In the background are her father and Mary Prieto

HELENA always celebrates her birthday with a theme party. Her children, Tanya and Katya and a waiter, dressed as a Nubian slave, join the fantasy.

PANDO Manipan (with the floral hat) as a Southern Belle, talking to Mary Prieto .

WHEN IMAGINATION WAS EVERYTHING

HOW POWER PEOPLE PARTY. Chito Vijandre, Chona Kasten and Milo Naval in 1981.

FROM the early 1980s to the mid-'90s, yearend parties hosted by maverick style arbiters Pacifico Luis "Chito" Vijandre y Trinos and Cesar Ricardo "Ricky" Toledo y Soler were eagerly anticipated by the younger social set. Held every 25th of December in their Bel-Air residence, the party was part of the chic set's social calendar.

The invitations were made according to the theme. Once, it was a postcard with a couple waltzing. The Russian party had an invitation written in Cyrillic script. Another invitation harked back to the era when Spanish was the lingua franca. It was a turn-of-the-century sepia with Art Nouveau and modern kitsch, and written in impeccable Spanish with the names of the organizers also spelled out in the Spanish system (with the mother's maiden name in the end). Guests had to figure out the translation.

Aside from Vijandre and Toledo, the committee included Percival Steven Lovina Rickard, Jaime Andres Perez Cordoba, Cirilo Alberto Lim Araneta, Paul Gordon Viaplana and Jim Tan Ang. On certain occasions, the team included Ricky Punzalan, Cal Lim, and Paul Gordon.

Style icon Chona Kasten christened the group "Makati Orchids." At that time, an "orchid" was understood to be a cut above the rest. Today, to be called an "orchid" is like being called a schmoozer or social climber. After all, the plant clings to something, just as the schmoozer needs to stay in the company of prominent people.

For years in a row, the theme parties revolved around countries that had monarchies, such as Russia and England. The guests naturally wore clothes and accessories on the theme. For a rare Filipino theme party, how could anyone not have fun with Queen Imelda as inspiration?

Two scenes

The parties were known for the decor, wild floral arrangements, and bonsai garden buffet tables. In 1981, the organizers created a labyrinth out of candles from the entrance to the party area. Of course, the house owners took untold precaution to protect their furniture, in case a fire broke out.

Vijandre recalls the '70s with gusto: "Posing (in front of the camera) wasn't the thing then. There was a creative side to attracting attention. You had to whip up your own drama to be noticed—not like today, when everybody just poses in their signatures."

Party dressing was an art, he said. "You made an outfit from 'found objects.' And you had to outdo the others!"

There were two kinds of party scenes: a throwback to the hippie generation, and the social set, composed of models and designers.

Drugs, downers and grass were taken to release inhibitions. On an altered state of consciousness, conversations delved into such profundities as self-realization, astrological planetary transits, and Transactional Analysis.

The social set was occupied with having new clothes made by their favorite designers, and learning the latest dance steps. (Hey, can any boomer out there remember the "12-Steps"?)

Chill-outs

Face value mattered in order to be invited. The models came from well-to-do families and carried clothes with an attitude.

Today, parties are either publicity-driven or chill-outs. Rave parties are known only to cliques. Forget chairs, mattresses are strewn on the floor, for guests who are bound to be under the influence of cat tranquilizers. Those who choose to be hyperkinetic sniff coke.

Parties today are consumerist in approach, from the logo-ed invitation to the streamers and merchandising in the venues. Everything, from the attire to the ambience, is made to be picture-pretty for post-event releases. If they're not sponsored, parties are a battlefield for labels, mobile phones, and surgical enhancement (for the boomers). The latest digital cameras document this commercial era of our social history. Unlike the chutzpah of the boomers, the younger generation's attitude is more self-conscious. "I am what I am, so shoot me!" Click! Even if themes and a new breed of "Power Gays" have come in, parties just no longer have the same magic and innocence.

Toledo theorizes that there was more time to prepare for a party and "more time to imagine." And the only agenda then was to have fun.

Marge C. Enriquez

THE AUTHOR. Fabulous at 50.

Clairvision comes to Manila

By Gina L. Lopez
Contributor

WHEN I was 18, I thought 50 was old and grey. But today as I turn 50, I feel amazingly young and alive! I recently had a party to thank the wonderful people in my life. Dancing under the stars with the breeze blowing, with the music of my youth playing—I could feel blessings from above. Life continues to offer challenges but I have learned to discover the gift that is at the center of each pain and difficulty. Life has become quite exciting!

The secret to turning 50 and being happy and excited is, without a doubt, internal growth. It's having a spiritual perspective on life. But even more important than that, it's being clear about what one's goals, understanding the drama of life and having the ability to bring all this beyond the intellect into the level of being.

Shot in the arm

It can't be an accident that I discovered it at this time... it's like an energy boost from heaven, for the next phase of my life. I have discovered a system of meditation which I have found superior to anything I have taken in the past 30 years.

I used to meditate and still be prone to anger and impatience. The restlessness of my mind just never stopped. I would have sporadic experiences of spiritual spaces, especially when surrounded by nature, but I didn't really feel I was getting anywhere.

Last July I came across Clairvision School, founded in Australia by Dr. Samuel Sagan, a Frenchman. I liked his books and enjoyed his retreat so much, that I invited him to the Philippines.

So why is this different from everything I have tried before?

1) I have found his meditation tapes (set to his own musical compositions) very effective in getting me out of the flurry of my mind. I enter spiritual spaces via more systematic way than I used to.

2) He offers a system of regression called ISIS. For this he has been awarded the Internal Cultural Diploma of Honor by the American Biographical Institute, and also in acknowledgement of the Clairvision style of psychotherapy and healing. Samuel says one can meditate for years and years and not really get anywhere unless emotional blockages are released. It's like rowing a boat while it's anchored. I can attest to this. In my youth I joined a group that did intense meditation. When I left the group, I felt I had not matured as much as I expected to. In ISIS, one is made aware of emotional blockages, and then regresses to release the "charge" or the influence of these blockages.

3) I find refreshing his focus on meeting the 21st Century head-on. Many spiritual groups tend to want to distance themselves from the material world in order to discover the spiritual. Samuel says our surrounding *is* the path to growth. Technology can be used to enhance our quality of life. He teaches his "students" how to live in an increasingly technological environment and still be "in control"—not letting technology take us over (which happens in many cases) but using it to heighten awareness.

4) He teaches great communication. After the retreat, I came back here feeling like I was seeing people for the first time. His techniques have helped me tune in to people.

5) His method is great/wonderful for creative work. I have learned—rather, I am learning— to tune in to spiritual spaces when I have to do creative work. There are tangible differences from when I just used to think from my mind.

6) I find his paradigm on "lower energy centers" refreshing. I have been in groups that sought to transmute all energies into "spiritual" energy, and which regarded "lower" energies as "not good." But in the retreat I learned to feel these energies deeply, and found an amazing vitality and dynamism in these energy centers. It's amusing because in one of the sessions, he even gave advice on how to heighten the sexual experience. What men should do, how to spiritualize sex, how couples can increase their libido! And it's still a part of spiritual life! I find his attitude towards life—very "with it."

> Dr. Samuel Sagan, Frenchman founder of this meditation school in Australia, will give two lectures, and conduct an 'Awakening the Third Eye' retreat

You don't get any kneejerk reactions here. It's just a school that teaches techniques. I feel so blessed to have discovered it at this time of my life. And I find it amazing that this article is coming out on my very birthday!

Invitation

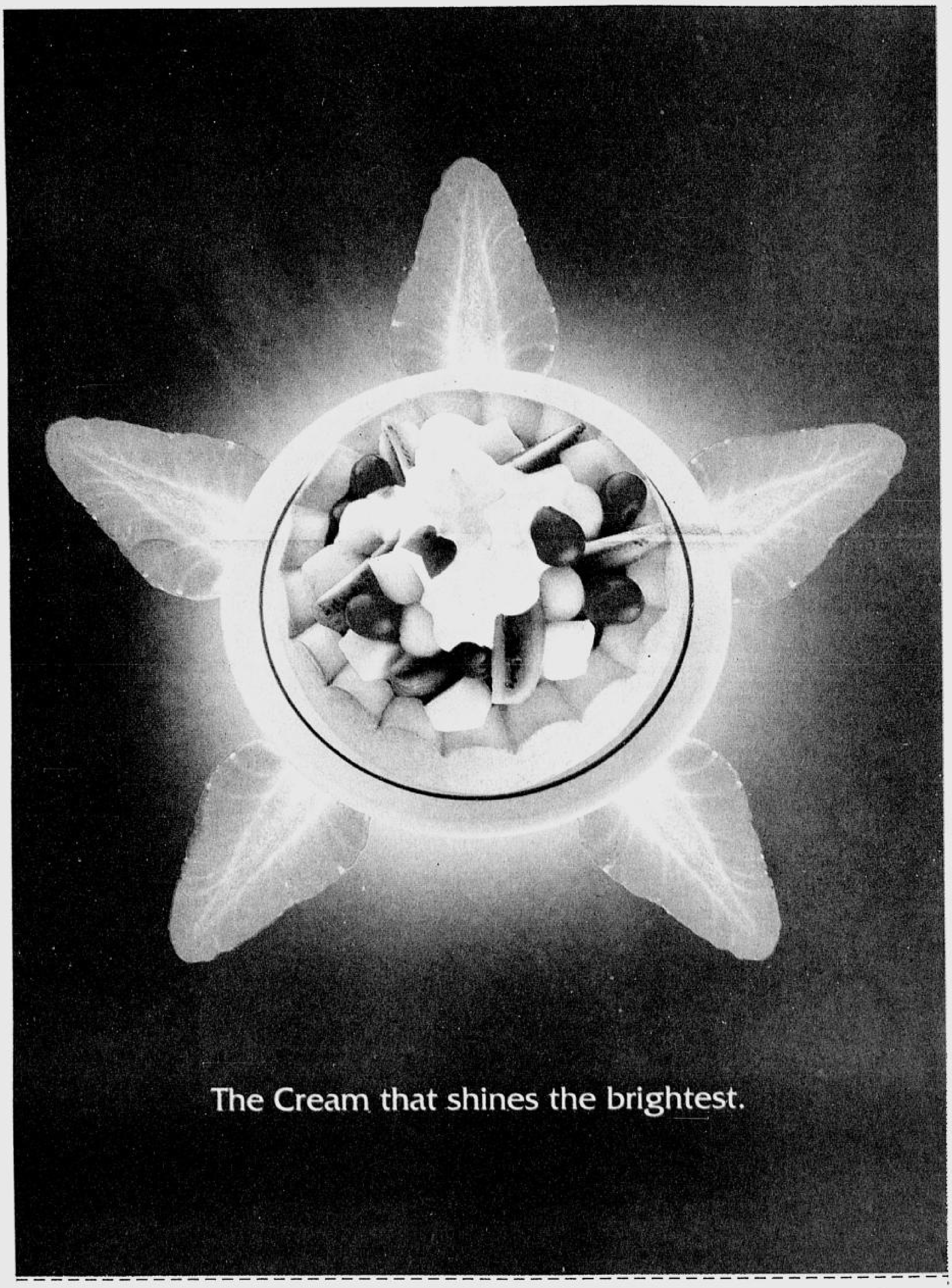
So this is my offering to all of you ... an invitation to come and explore an avenue for your personal growth.

A country is made great by its people. The economy, the information highway --all these are important. But at the end of the day, it's the substance of people that will make the country move. Spiritual growth is the answer for the 21st Century.

Sagan's books are now available at Fully Booked and Power Book outlets. I highly recommend "Atlantean Secrets." I couldn't put this book down! If you enjoyed "Lord of the Rings" and legends, this one's for you. It leads you to spiritual spaces. I have read all four volumes and I am now reading it to my seven-year-old. He loves it!

The books on "Regression—Past Life Therapy" and "Awakening the Third Eye" also are also must-reads.

Come and attend Dr. Samuel Sagan's lectures: on Jan. 30 and Feb. 4, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Manansala Loft at Rockwell. Call for reservations. Afterwards he will give an "Awakening the Third Eye" retreat at the Lopez Center in Antipolo from the evening of Feb. 6 to Feb. 10. If you are interested, please reserve now as spaces are limited. Call (0920) 851-9717 or email afi_seminar@abs-cbn.com.



Melon Cream Boat

1	*whole honeydew melon*
2	*med. ripe mangoes, sliced*
3	*pcs. kiwis, peeled and cut into wedges*
1-1/4	*cup (approx. 200g) seedless grapes*
2	*tbsp. confectioners' sugar*
1	*170g. can* ***NESTLÉ Cream***
	chilled juice of 1 orange
	thin strips of orange zest, for garnish

Cut off about 2 inches of the stem end of the melon; discard the seeds and scoop out the flesh into small balls and place in a bowl. Add the mangoes, kiwis and grapes to the melon balls. Refrigerate.

Sift sugar on top and then sprinkle with orange juice. Spoon the mixture into the melon boat. Pour chilled **NESTLÉ Cream** on top. Garnish with orange zest. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Note: Cantaloupe may be used in place of honeydew melon.

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SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre
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Sarah's star continues to rise

GERONIMO. Cast in two films.

By Nestor U. Torre

WINNERS of national singing competitions are feted and fussed over for a time, but often revert back to anonymity. That's why, when Sarah Geronimo won the top plum in last year's "Star for A Night" singing contest, even her most enthusiastic backers weren't sure what lay in store for her in terms of show biz stardom and popularity.

Concert artist

Luckily for Sarah, it now turns out that the search's producer, Viva Entertainment, was serious about making her a star—and, not just in the recording field, but on TV and in the movies, and as a concert artist, as well.

Sarah's initial success as a show biz comer was the good showing of her debut album, "Popstar." Its sales are unusually strong for a new singer like her, a tribute not just to her singing talent, but also to Viva's build-up machinery and starmaking prowess.

Next, Sarah was made to guest on a number of TV shows, to make her a more readily recognizable presence on the entertainment scene.

Then, she's been cast in two movies, first in "Filipinas," an entry in the 2003 Metro filmfest which unreels on Dec. 25, and next in "Annie B.," a Jolina Magdangal starrer.

In the works

In addition, she has several concerts in the works, plus mall tours to promote her various projects. All that's a lot to handle for the 15-year-old comer, which is why she's put her studies on hold this year.

We hope, though, that Sarah makes time for school next year, no matter how hectic her schedule may become. Stardom's fine, but education is forever.

Hard time

It's important that Sarah resumes her studies next year, because many stars who stopped studying for a number of years have had a hard time going to school again after their careers have stabilized.

Sarah must also learn not to spread herself out too thinly. Despite what her handlers may say, it's tough being both a good singer and sensitive actress at the same time. Something's gotta give, and in most instances when singers attempt to act without much preparation, they end up with thespic egg on their faces.

The young comer should remind herself that she's only in her mid-teens, so what's the rush? She should study acting for six months before daring to make another movie. That way, she would impress viewers more with her confidence and competence.

Solo performer

It's also too early to put her in a love team. Let her firm up her mettle as a solo performer first before giving her performances a romantic orientation. Love teams have a way of trivializing careers of young talents, and would come off as even more irrelevant and distracting in Sarah's case, because her dramatic voice hints at a thespic depth that concocted puppy love and crushes would only dilute.

It looks like Viva does have a promising young star in Sarah Geronimo, but her potential should be mined slowly and judiciously, so that her star can shine for a long, long time.

Comedienne Rufa Mae Quinto finally takes a break from TV-film work

By Jocelyn Valle

QUINTO. Enterprising spirit.

FOR the first time since entering the biz eight years ago, Rufa Mae Quinto is finally having a real vacation this Christmas season. "I'm spending the holidays with my friends in Los Angeles (California, USA), then I'll visit my boyfriend Rudy Hatfield's folks in Michigan," she shares.

Commitments

The "Booba" heroine, who plays a villain in "Captain Barbell," insists, though, that she's not expecting a marriage proposal while she's abroad. For starters, Rudy will be flying immediately to Australia with his basketball buddies, while she returns home to fulfill some work-related commitments, particularly her new film assignment, "Masikip sa Dibdib."

"And there's still a lot of things that I want to do," says the 25-year-old sexy comedienne.

Aside from acting, Rufa Mae is keenly interested in the production side of the business. In fact, she's also the line producer of "Masikip sa Dibdib," a comedy by Joyce Bernal. "I want to be totally involved in the movies that I make," she beams.

Sitcom

"*At saka*, idol *ko si* Bong!," she quips, referring this time to the actor who plays Captain Barbell and the *barangay* captain in their sitcom, "Idol Ko si Kap," Bong Revilla.

Rufa Mae is into other businesses, like a salon and a boutique. She got her enterprising spirit from her grandmother, she says. "You should see her. She's a walking *tiangge*!"

But Ruffa's industry and independence come from years of being both a sister and a mother to her siblings. (Her parents separated years ago and have found new spouses since.)

Internet café

Her brother Archie has put up an Internet café, while 17-year-old Glenn is engaged in buy-and-sell. Vincent, 21, is into culinary arts and Rufa Mae is eyeing him to manage the bakeshop she's planning to open. Sisters G-Jan and Kyla are in second year high school and Grade 4, respectively.

On her father's side, Rufa Mae has seen brothers Pacho and Tonio through college, while sister Gabriella is an aspiring ballet dancer.

"I'm proud to have been a part of what they've become," she exclaims. If she ever settles down with Rudy in the States, Rufa Mae knows they'll be fine!

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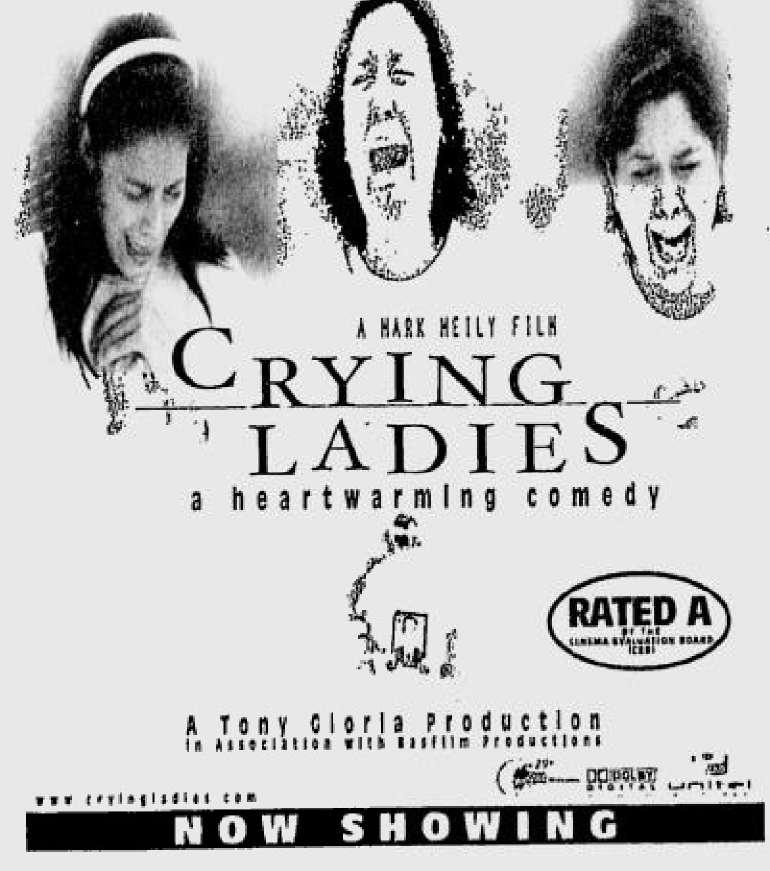

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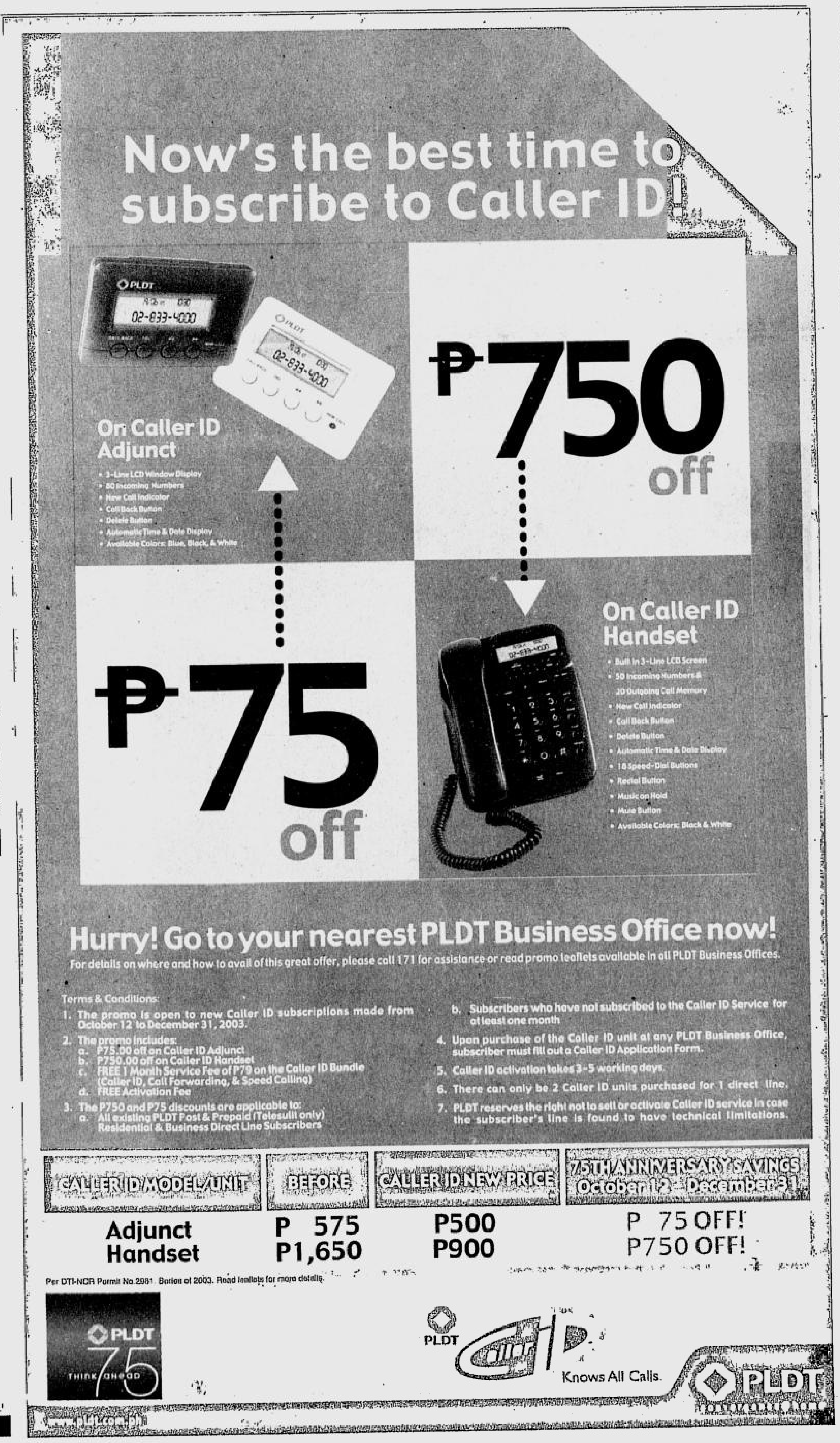

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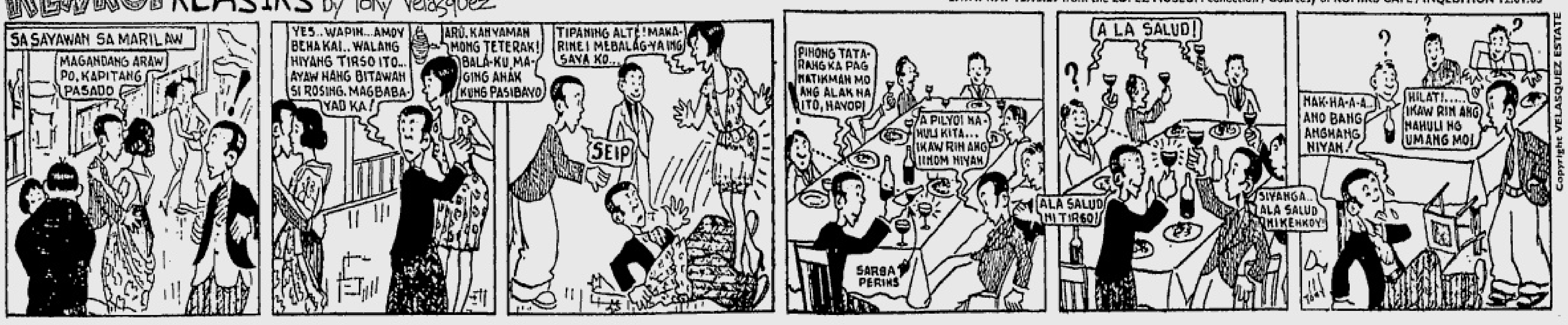
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YOUR WEEKLY TV GUIDE FROM DEC. 27 - JAN. 2

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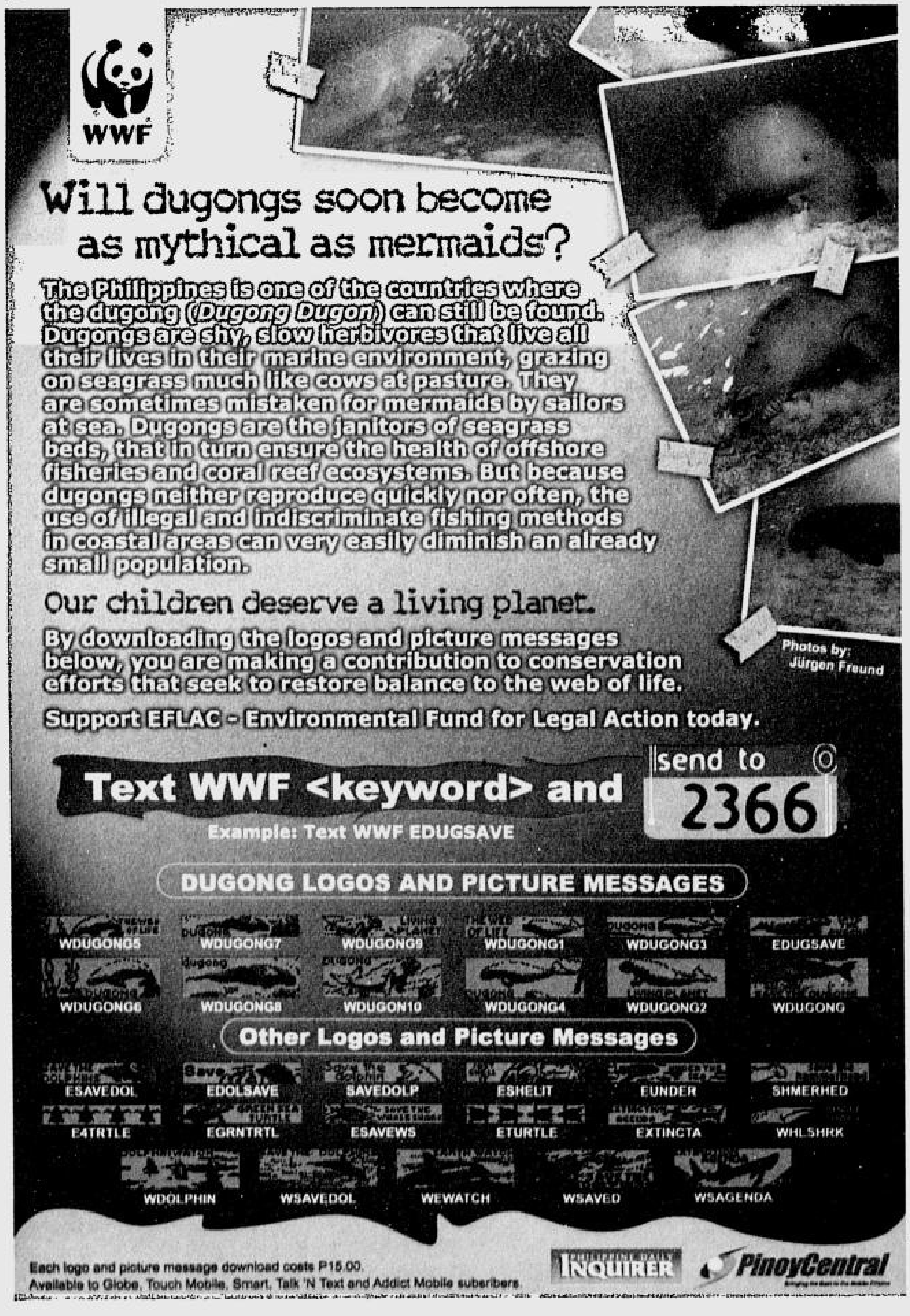
WWF

Will dugongs soon become as mythical as mermaids?

The Philippines is one of the countries where the dugong (*Dugong Dugon*) can still be found. Dugongs are shy, slow herbivores that live all their lives in their marine environment, grazing on seagrass much like cows at pasture. They are sometimes mistaken for mermaids by sailors at sea. Dugongs are the janitors of seagrass beds, that in turn ensure the health of offshore fisheries and coral reef ecosystems. But because dugongs neither reproduce quickly nor often, the use of illegal and indiscriminate fishing methods in coastal areas can very easily diminish an already small population.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER PinoyCentral

Martin Nievera extols Christmas, Pinoy-style

By Mary Ann A. Bautista

'BALIKBAYANS' who come over during the holidays swear that the Christmas spirit here is something special. Thus, whenever the Christmas season draws near, they yearn to be back home.

Dream

Martin Nievera fulfilled his dream of performing abroad. "I've always wanted to perform in the States because I like challenging myself. I performed for 30,000 people—and they were not my fans, they were Americans! If I get scared now, I'll never make it," Martin beams.

He has had the best of both worlds during the holidays. Which celebration does he prefer, American or Pinoy style?

He says, "In the U.S., Santa Claus is the star. Here, it's Jesus. I like the mystery of knowing who Santa Claus is, but I'm also a true believer that Christ was born on that day, and that we should celebrate it. We haven't seen Jesus either, but we know he's for real!

NIEVERA. Has had the best of both worlds.

Mystery

"So, the mystery that Santa presents helps me believe in Jesus Christ. That's the way it should be."

Martin shares, "I wrote and recorded two Christmas songs ("All I Want This Christmas" and "Can't Stop Christmas") because I believe in this special season."

For *noche buena*, Martin looks forward to good food. "My mom in the States makes great turkey with stuffing. It's very American. My mother-in-law *naman* makes delicious *kalamay* (sticky coconut cake) and *embutido*."

Give as Jesus gave

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

MY teacher once asked a friend of mine who was about to go home by bike, "Where did you get your bicycle?"

My friend replied, "Oh, Jennifer lent it to me."

Dangerous

My teacher said, "It seems she doesn't like you very much. It is getting dark—that bike is dangerous because it doesn't have reflectors and the right accessories to warn drivers of your presence on the road."

That incident made my friend think seriously about the value of thoughtfulness. It is not enough to give or share with people, it must be done with genuine concern.

The Christmas season inspires people to give to others, but they sometimes forget what is best and what will make people truly happy. For example, a family of vegetarians gets a Christmas gift that turns out to be a cooked chicken, and instead of being happy, they are distressed by the gift!

The same goes for a man who never takes intoxicants or smokes, but is gifted with a bottle of wine.

Full consciousness

Real happiness is full consciousness of who you are, the purpose of life and your relationship with the Supreme Being and others.

Some people are more thoughtful and ask parents, "What can I give your kids?" One particular parent always requests, "Please don't give them junk food. Instead, you can give them fruits and other healthy food, and educational toys instead of guns and games that will increase their attraction to violence or sex."

Let us learn from the great example set by Jesus Christ: He befriended animals; he did not kill them for a feast. He spoke the truth; he did not cheat or lie to people. He brought health to body, mind and spirit; he did not make people drunk or sick. He gave the highest gift—love. He showed the way to real peace.

If we are one in purpose with God, we can give people the best gift that they truly need.

Email lotuspond108@hotmail.com

Unique competition

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

GMA-7's "Extra Challenge" has a unique competition these days: five young women from different fields are vying for a chance to replace Miriam Quiambao as Paolo's co-host on the reality-based program.

Miriam is leaving the show to get married and to live in Hong Kong for a spell. To show that they have what it takes to step into her shoes, the five prospective replacements are being made to perform some of the unusual tasks that Miriam has tackled on the show.

Some of those tasks are pretty far-out, so a couple of contenders have admitted to being taken aback. Still, most of them have decided to bite the bullet and stick it out until the final choice is made.

Eventual winner

To make the selection process an even more empathetic experience, a substantial percentage of the decision has been assigned to televiewers' own texted choices. Thus, the eventual winner can be said to be a popular choice, hopefully resulting in more loyal viewership for the program once Paolo's new co-host starts working with him.

At this point, it's too early to tell who are pacing the field in the competition. The contestants who don't come from show biz initially appear to have had a problem learning the ropes on the job, so to speak.

But, when we watched the show last Dec. 19, all five ladies were still onboard, with the less determined ones apparently having gotten over their doubts, and now bent on seeing the "friendly" competition to its conclusion.

A good thing, too, since the challenge they had to tackle that day was a particularly daunting one: they were all required to climb up very high scaffolding to help unfold a huge billboard display about them and their participation in "Extra Challenge."

The billboard was so high up in the air that the task looked really difficult, but all of the contestants were able to pull it off. That rates them a double A for aerial audacity!

The Dec. 19 telecast ended with the contestants being asked to do spiels for the show. Since they were newcomers, they didn't have an easy time memorizing all those lines, and saying them with authority.

Director

It got to the point that the show's director walked out on one of the contenders, who looked really nonplussed as he stomped off. We can only hope that he was "good-timing" the contestant, to test her resolve and discipline under fire.

The contenders' resolve will be tested even more in succeeding telecasts. Preview shots of future tests show the girls having to ingest all sorts of weird foodstuff, and tame the wild outdoors. Goodness, that co-hosting job on "Extra Challenge" must really be special, for these personable and unflappable young women to agree to being subjected to so many ordeals and indignities!

Of course, it could also happen that, after the winner shall have been chosen, even the "losers" would be picked up by other shows, because they shall have become popular in their own right after their many days of exposure on "Extra Challenge." We really wish that would happen because, in our inveterately optimisticscenario, everybody wins!

QUIAMBAO. Leaving "Extra Challenge" to get married.

Movies on TV

On HBO, Dec. 27 at 9:45 a.m., "Riding in Cars with Boys." 10:30 p.m., "Enemy at the Gates." Dec. 28 at 1:30 p.m., "Black Hawk Down." Dec. 29 at 7:30 p.m., "Black Beauty." 9 p.m., "Showtime." Dec. 30 at 1:15 p.m., "With Honors." Dec. 31 at 9 p.m., "The Fellowship of the Ring" (Director's Cut). Jan. 1 at 11 p.m., "The Presidio." Jan. 2 at 5:30 p.m., "All the Pretty Horses."

On Cinemax, Dec. 27 at 5:45 p.m., "Crossing Delancey." Dec. 28 at 4 p.m., "Picture Claire." Dec. 29 at 6 a.m., "The Bridges at Toko-Ri." Dec. 30 at 11 a.m., "Circle of Friends." 9 p.m., "Zoolander." Dec. 31 at 11 p.m., "The Fourth Protocol." Jan. 1 at 6 a.m., "Hysteria: The Def Leppard Story." Jan. 2 at 10:45 a.m., "A Place in the Sun."

Streisand pays tribute to film music

By Rito P. Asilo

BARBRA Streisand makes musical magic through sheer talent and slick production values, despite a less-than-impressive lineup in her latest collection, "The Movie Album," a collection of songs from movies—from 1936's "Modern Times" ("Smile") to 1988's "Baghdad Café" ("Calling You").

Lushly soulful

From the first track, the lushly soulful "Smile," which Streisand sings with uncommon introspection, to her sweeping renditions of "Moon River" (from "Breakfast at Tiffany's"), "Emily" ("The Americanization of Emily") and "I'm In The Mood for Love" ("Every Night at Eight"), the 61-year-old diva's from-the-gut soulfulness imbues these songs with her distinctive sound. Also notable is her haunting take on "Calling You," with its hypnotic arrangement.

But if you're not a Streisand fanatic, some of the melancholia *cum* nostalgia-heavy numbers will leave you feeling ho-hum. There is nothing much in the collection that's revelatory, except that the songstress finds these tunes appealing to sing, and that makes for uneven listening.

12-track set

The CD leaflet, though, explains her choice of songs in the 12-track set: "Smile" is dedicated to her nine-year-old dog which had to be put to sleep two nights before recording; and she loves "More in Love With You" so much that, on her wedding day, she walked down the aisle to it.

Despite Streisand's unquestionable interpretive skills, some songs teeter on maudlin melodrama. She stumbles in "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?," the theme from 1982's "Best Friends" and a karaoke staple in these parts. This may be due to the cloying sentimentality of the lyrics that tilts the focus away from its soaring melody.

Nevertheless, even without show-stopping tunes like "The Broadway Album's" "Putting It Together," "The Movie Album" is a must for lovers of good songs and splendid singing.

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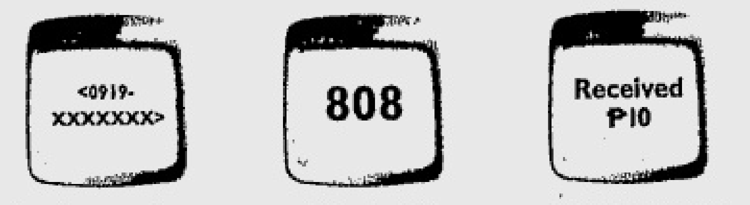
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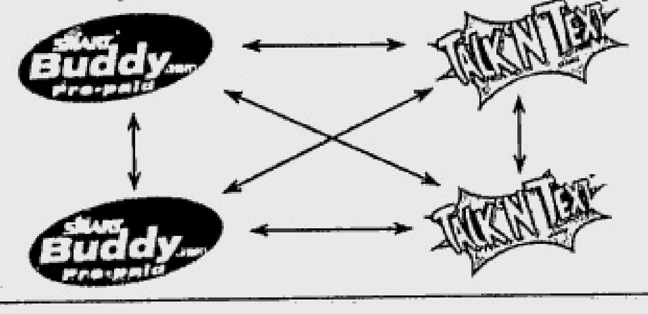
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SATURDAY *Special*

PENN. Doesn't compromise artistic integrity by choosing unchallenging commercial projects.

Sean Penn is admired by his peers

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

FROM Ronalisa Bacalan: "I was touched by Sean Penn's performance in 'Mystic River.' I know that he's also a good director, but how versatile is he as an actor?"

Sean Penn may be known for his intense portrayals in dramatic features ("Casualties of War," "Hurlyburly," "Dead Man Walking," "Sweet and Lowdown," "The Falcon and the Snowman," "21 Grams"), but he also excels in comedy.

Teen cult classic

In fact, he played the ultimate surfer dude in the teen cult classic, "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" (1982), with Phoebe Cates, responsible for uttering the famous line, "Let's party!," right into the pop culture lexicon.

He startles moviegoers and film critics with his dedication to his craft by "creating" characters that are very different from his other roles. In "Carlito's Way," he altered his appearance by shaving back his hairline, frizzing his hair, and wearing wire-rim glasses to play Al Pacino's sleazy lawyer.

Caustic tongue

Penn is known for his caustic tongue. Discussing Oliver Stone, he said: "Stone's basic pig nature keeps him from doing the best of what he ought to do. And it keeps him from being someone I want to run into." Ouch!

He once said: "I can never get ahead of the Hollywood game because of the movies that I appear in." But he doesn't want to compromise his artistic integrity by choosing commercial projects that don't offer any challenge. For "Hurlyburly," he was paid only $150,000, but he won the Venice Filmfest's Volpi Cup Best Actor prize in 1998 for his performance in the film.

Even Sean's peers sing his praises: Larry King once quoted Marlon Brando as saying, "Sean Penn is the best living actor!'" From George Clooney: "Sean is the most talented actor of my generation—we're around the same age—so, it was a little intimidating working with him for the first time."

And from Meryl Streep: "Sean is the actor I'd most like to work with. He is brilliant, inventive and compassionate. His choices are unpredictable and true."

Last week, Penn won the film season's first Best Actor award (from the National Board of Review) for his searing performance in Clint Eastwood's "Mystic River."

Film industry needs new heroes

By Rica Arevalo

WATCHING Sharon Cuneta announce on national TV that she hopes to produce relevant Filipino films and discover new writers and directors makes us happy about her outlook for the TV and film industries.

Cuneta gambled by starring in "Crying Ladies," Mark Meily's directorial debut, and her effort paid off when her new film copped an "A" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board. If we see more actors giving substantial and sincere service back to the entertainment industry, less mediocre films will be produced.

Original story

We need new film heroes to uplift the industry—a producer who is open to taking risks by gambling on new directors and writers to create original stories to inspire Filipinos, and a film archive manager who will save our film treasures from the molds-and-vinegar syndrome.

We have to put the Philippines back on the map of major international film festivals. This can be done if festival programmers can access our films easily. Producers have to supply them with information as to where prints can be found, the status of those prints, and if they are still available.

Free access to information is vital if we want to attract an international audience.

Open arms

European and Asian films are slowly coming to the commercial theater circuit, and we welcome this development with open arms. People now pay to watch non-Hollywood films in malls.

Regarding piracy, bulldozing the discs or raiding stalls and confiscating machines are just a small part of the solution. The bottom line is media education. If, at an early age, we teach children to respect ownership, and tell them that stealing in any form is damaging, then piracy may not be the monstrous problem that it is today.

We look forward to the Metro Manila Film Festival because it showcases important local movies. During the festival, producers shell out a lot of money for their entries because viewers are expected to troop to theaters to watch these "quality" films. But money does not always equal quality.

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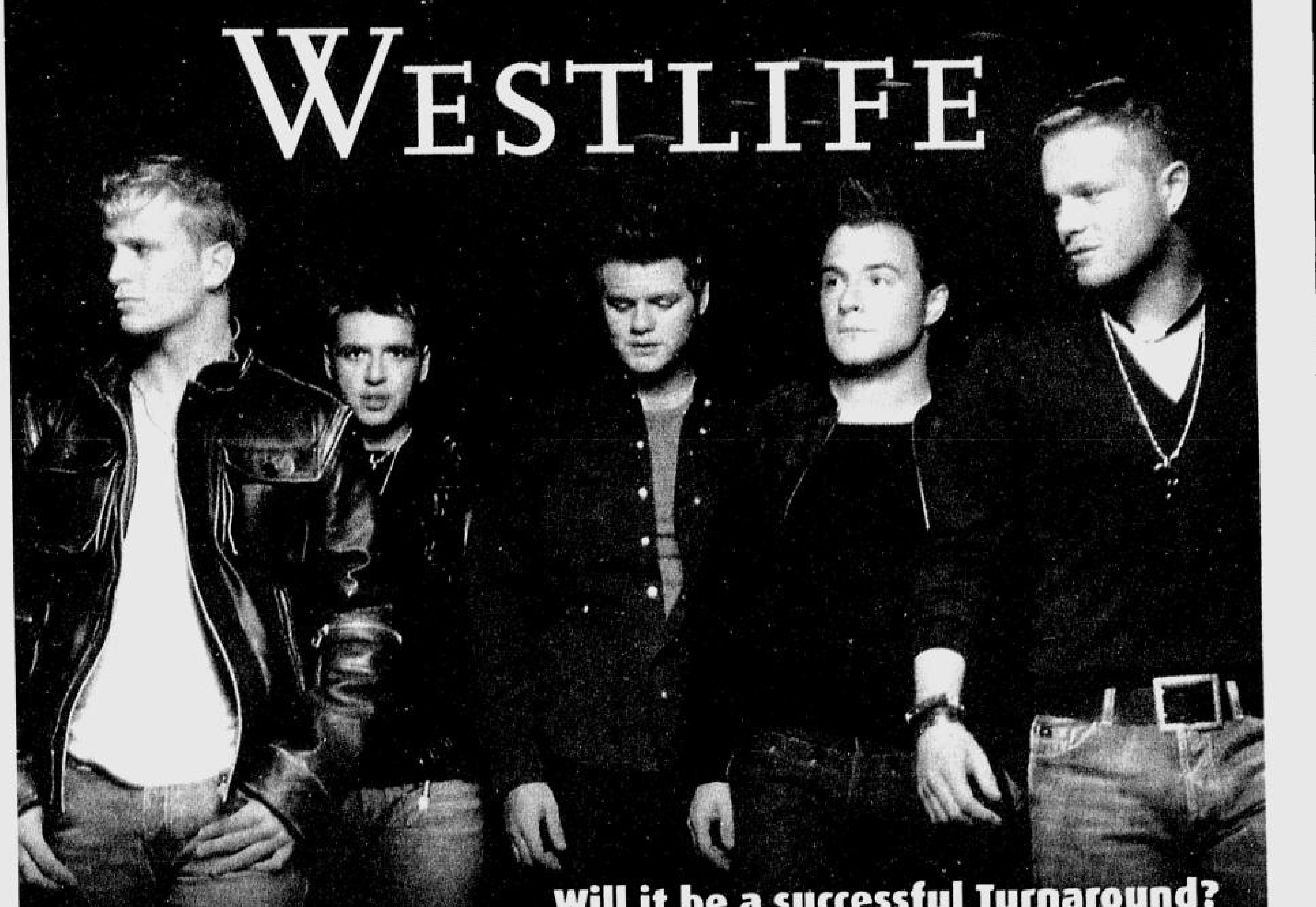

Will it be a successful Turnaround?
Or will it be their last album?
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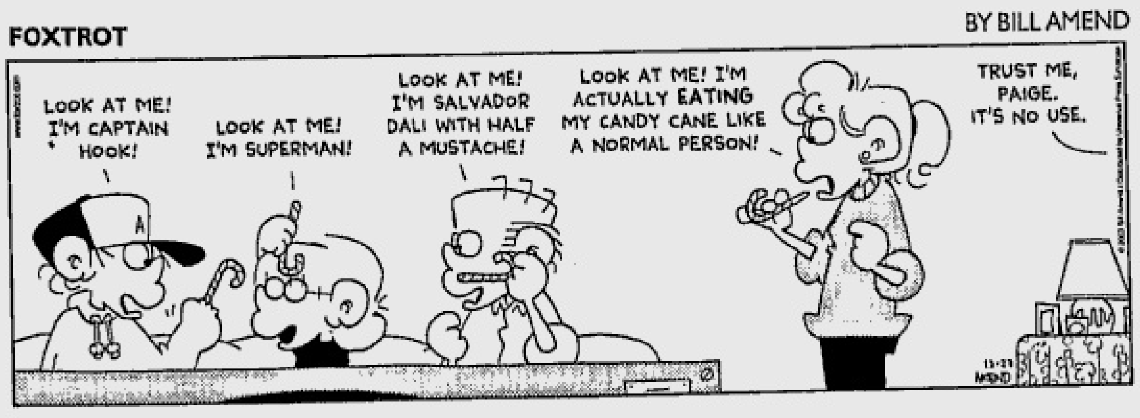
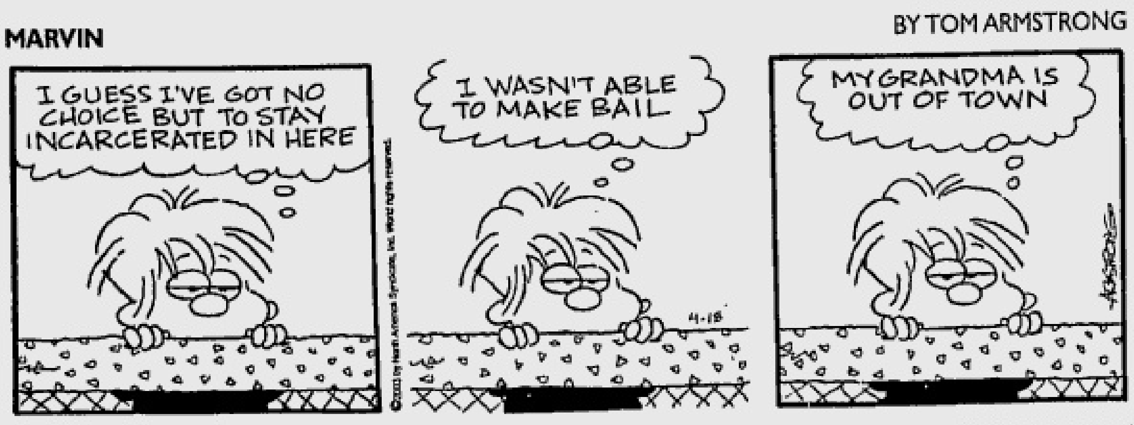
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


LOOK AT ME! I'M CAPTAIN HOOK!
LOOK AT ME! I'M SUPERMAN!
LOOK AT ME! I'M SALVADOR DALI WITH HALF A MUSTACHE!
LOOK AT ME! I'M ACTUALLY EATING MY CANDY CANE LIKE A NORMAL PERSON!
TRUST ME, PAIGE. IT'S NO USE.

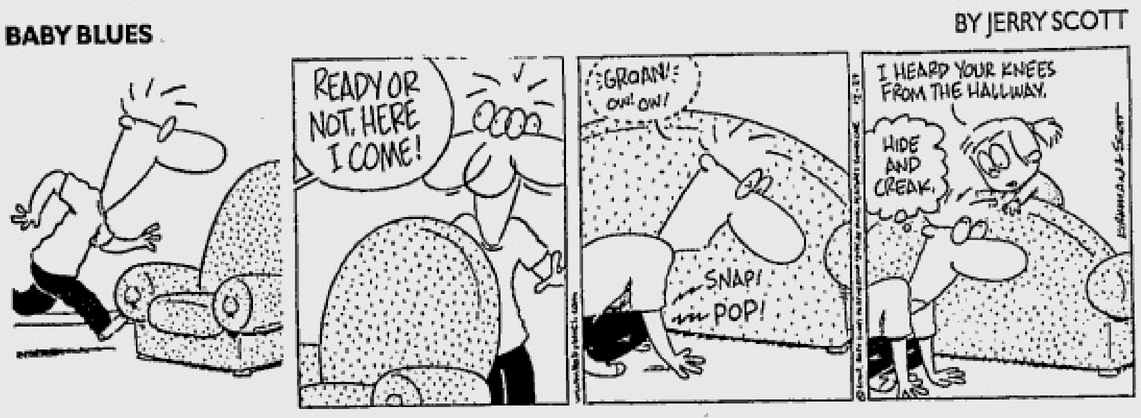
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I GUESS I'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO STAY INCARCERATED IN HERE
I WASN'T ABLE TO MAKE BAIL
MY GRANDMA IS OUT OF TOWN

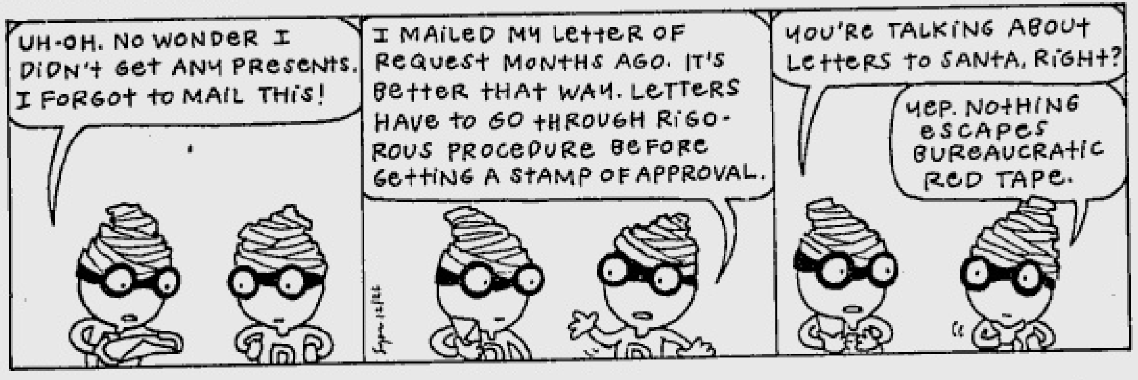
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


READY OR NOT, HERE I COME!
GROAN! OW! OW!
SNAP!
POP!
I HEARD YOUR KNEES FROM THE HALLWAY.
HIDE AND CREAK.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


UH-OH. NO WONDER I DIDN'T GET ANY PRESENTS. I FORGOT TO MAIL THIS!
I MAILED MY LETTER OF REQUEST MONTHS AGO. IT'S BETTER THAT WAY. LETTERS HAVE TO GO THROUGH RIGOROUS PROCEDURE BEFORE GETTING A STAMP OF APPROVAL.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT LETTERS TO SANTA, RIGHT?
YEP. NOTHING ESCAPES BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a strong sense of service to humanity. You're genuinely concerned with the needs of others. People love you because you're good-natured, humorous and caring. You are far more sensitive than most would guess. It's important to defend your own independence and self-interest. You will wrap up some major cycles in your life this year.
Birthdate of: Cokie Roberts, journalist; Johannes Kepler, astronomer; Marlene Dietrich, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Keep in mind that whatever you do, you are in high focus right now. Because others notice what you do and say, you have to be more aware of your actions.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): It's important that you indulge your strong need to expand your world right now. Enroll in a course. Read different books and magazines. Be open to other points of view.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your desire to improve yourself is very strong now. Capitalize on this impulse by eliminating harmful habits. Then slowly replace these with wholesome ones.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can learn a lot about yourself from your closest friends and partners today. But keep in mind, you can't learn anything if you are doing all the talking.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Health and hygiene matters concern you more than usual today. You want to make improvements your body and general well-being and your lifestyle. Get more exercise.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): It's important to value your creative impulses. It doesn't matter if others approve of what you create. The process (not the product) is everything.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Discussions with a parent or family member are significant today. You feel you have to defend your actions in some way. Partners and close friends might be critical.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A short day trip can be delightful today! Don't stay at home. Get out and do something stimulating by talking, shopping and visiting others. Enjoy yourself!

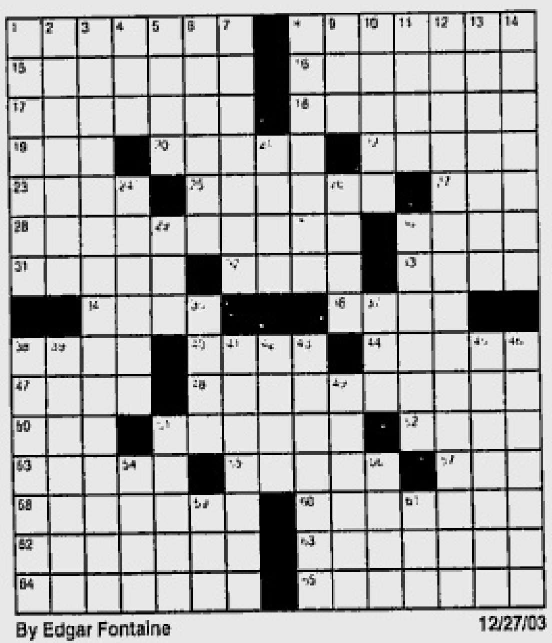
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're concerned about your cash flow today. Moneymaking ideas occur to you now. However, you also have lots of opportunities to spend your cash as well.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You keep running into people from your past, especially close friends and ex-partners. Consider this an opportunity to catch up on old news and learn more about yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Enjoy today in a quiet, pleasant way. Don't try to do too much. You need more rest than usual. However, you also feel social and friendly.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Old friends offer you an opportunity to rehash the "good old days." Somehow this prompts you to consider making a major purchase. You also want to earn more money if you can.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Edgar Fontaine
Dighton, MA

12/27/03

ACROSS
1 Du Maurier classic
8 Dead body
15 People of the press?
16 Add dash to
17 Scups
18 From now on
19 Air pressure meas.
20 Adds, as software
22 Word before mouth or pool
23 Bart Simpson's sister
25 Mediate
27 Clod buster
28 Longfellow poem
30 Cribbage markers
31 Medicinal plant
32 Certain NCO
33 Assayer's samples
34 Waste treatment center
36 Plays a role
38 Kournikova of tennis
40 Units of resistance
44 Curses
47 Tangible
48 Nemo or Ahab, e.g.
50 Steve Martin song, "King __"
51 Sounds like a cricket
52 Gumbo ingredient
53 Take out lines?
55 Give feedback
57 Mind-reading letters
58 Light, dry white wine
60 Dense fog
62 Draws breath
63 On the way
64 Annual periods
65 Portlier

DOWN
1 Wavelets
2 Weathering
3 1992 Sally Kellerman film
4 Part of C. of E.
5 Top off four walls
6 Like jambalaya
7 Attacks
8 Discontinuing
9 Massachusetts cape
10 Greeting-card message
11 Sniper's duds
12 Richard Dreyfuss sequel
13 Donald Duck's uncle
14 Woman with insight
21 Speaker's platform
24 Yearly
26 Stiff bristle
29 Rita of "Klute"
30 Couch denizen
35 Ritzy
37 Perp's captor
38 Apollo's twin sister
39 Brain cell: var.
41 Will VIP
42 Paddock mother
43 Embarrassing predicaments
45 Hairy
46 Red fish
49 Climb
51 Yo-yo Ma's instrument
54 Black and Yellow
56 Source of poi
59 Sportscaster Berman
61 Old French coin

Friday's Puzzle Solved

L	O	A	F	■	H	U	N	T	■	H	O	L	D	S
O	P	I	E	■	A	R	E	A	■	A	B	O	U	T
B	E	N	D	S	I	N	T	H	E	R	I	V	E	R
O	N	T	O	U	R	■	S	O	L	D	■	E	T	A
■	■	■	R	E	P	O	■	E	A	T	C	R	O	W
A	B	B	A	■	I	L	L	■	N	I	L	■	■	■
S	A	O	■	I	N	D	I	A	■	M	A	N	G	O
T	W	I	S	T	S	I	N	T	H	E	W	I	N	D
A	L	L	A	H	■	E	U	R	O	S	■	L	A	D
■	■	■	P	A	W	■	S	I	C	■	S	E	W	S
F	U	S	S	P	O	T	■	A	K	I	N	■	■	■
O	V	A	■	P	E	R	K	■	S	C	A	T	H	E
C	U	R	V	E	S	I	N	T	H	E	R	O	A	D
A	L	I	E	N	■	A	E	R	O	■	L	O	L	A
L	A	S	T	S	■	L	E	A	P	■	S	T	E	M

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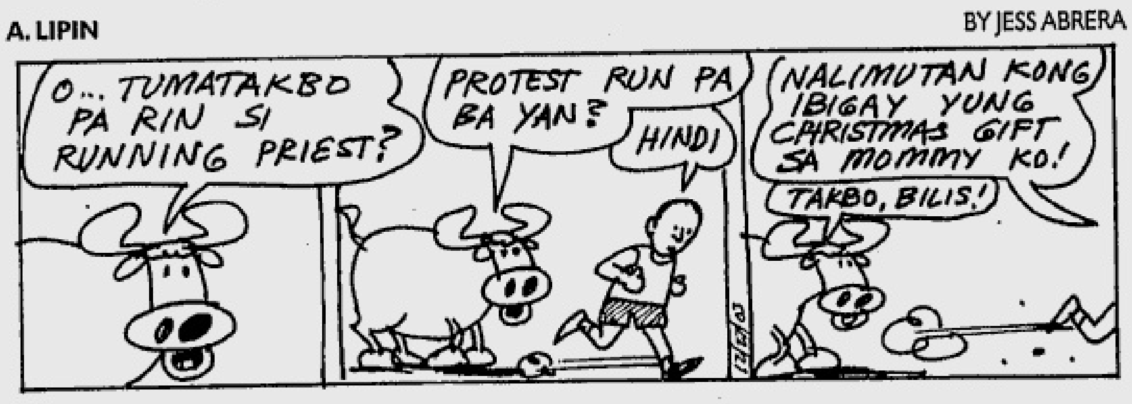
12/27/03

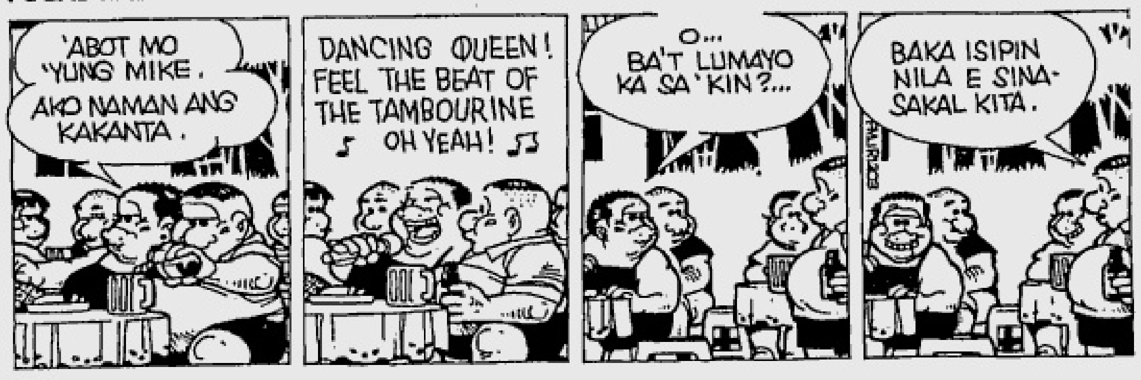
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... TUMATAKBO PA RIN SI RUNNING PRIEST?
PROTEST RUN PA BA YAN?
HINDI
NALIMUTAN KONG IBIGAY YUNG CHRISTMAS GIFT SA MOMMY KO!
TAKBO, BILIS!

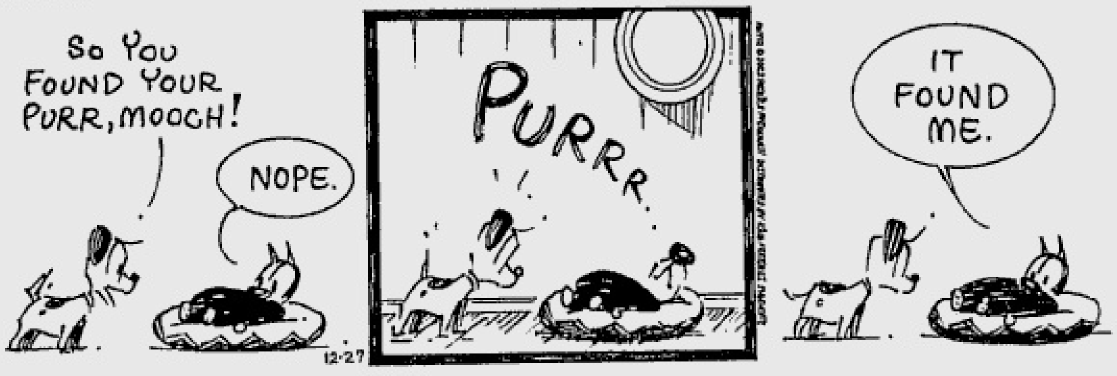
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


'ABOT MO 'YUNG MIKE. AKO NAMAN ANG KAKANTA.
DANCING QUEEN! FEEL THE BEAT OF THE TAMBOURINE OH YEAH!
O... BA'T LUMAYO KA SA 'KIN?...
BAKA ISIPIN NILA E SINASAKAL KITA.

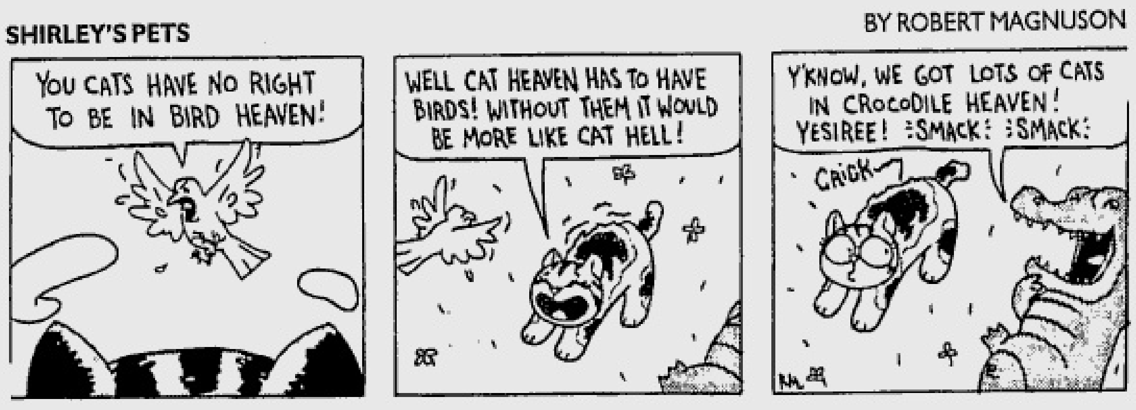
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SO YOU FOUND YOUR PURR, MOOCH!
NOPE.
PURRR
IT FOUND ME.
12-27

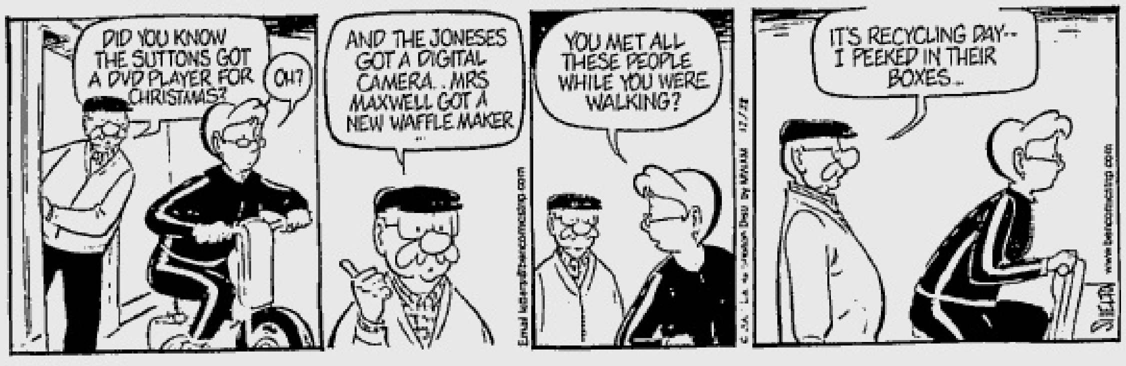
SHIRLEY'S PETS

BY ROBERT MAGNUSON


YOU CATS HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE IN BIRD HEAVEN!
WELL CAT HEAVEN HAS TO HAVE BIRDS! WITHOUT THEM IT WOULD BE MORE LIKE CAT HELL!
Y'KNOW, WE GOT LOTS OF CATS IN CROCODILE HEAVEN! YESIREE! SMACK! SMACK!
CRICK

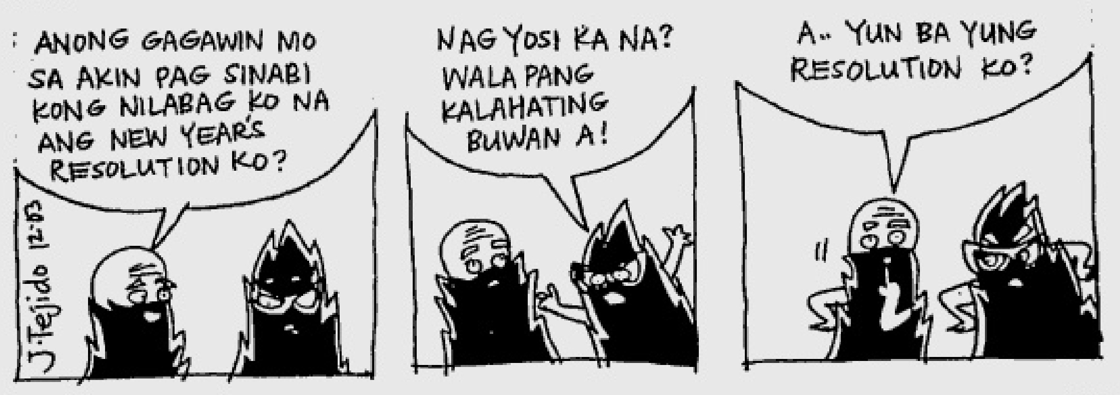
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


DID YOU KNOW THE SUTTONS GOT A DVD PLAYER FOR CHRISTMAS?
OH?
AND THE JONESES GOT A DIGITAL CAMERA.. MRS MAXWELL GOT A NEW WAFFLE MAKER
YOU MET ALL THESE PEOPLE WHILE YOU WERE WALKING?
IT'S RECYCLING DAY-- I PEEKED IN THEIR BOXES..

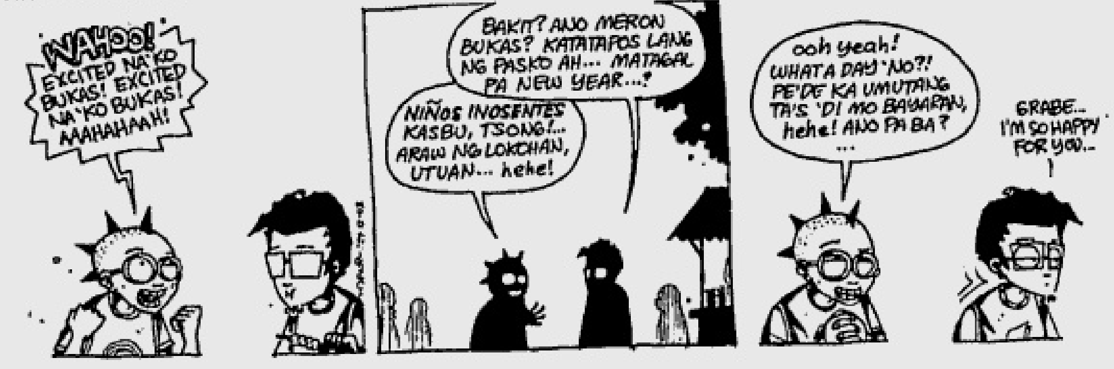
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANONG GAGAWIN MO SA AKIN PAG SINABI KONG NILABAG KO NA ANG NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION KO?
NAG YOSI KA NA? WALA PANG KALAHATING BUWAN A!
A.. YUN BA YUNG RESOLUTION KO?
J. Tejido 12-03

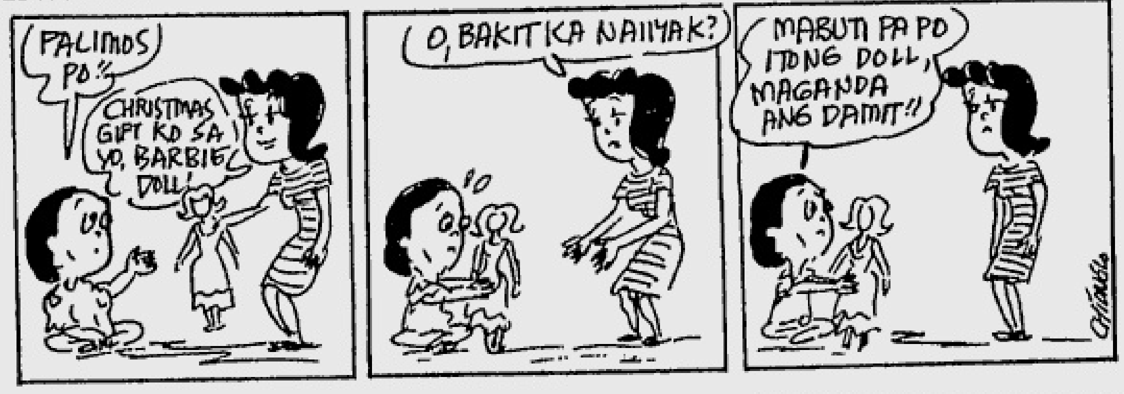
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


WAHOO! EXCITED NA'KO BUKAS! EXCITED NA'KO BUKAS! AAAHAHAAH!
NIÑOS INOSENTES KASBU, TSONG!... ARAW NG LOKOHAN, UTUAN... hehe!
BAKIT? ANO MERON BUKAS? KATATAPOS LANG NG PASKO AH... MATAGAL PA NEW YEAR...?
ooh yeah! WHAT A DAY 'NO?! PE'DE KA UMUTANG TA'S 'DI MO BAYARAN, hehe! ANO PA BA? ...
GRABE... I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU..

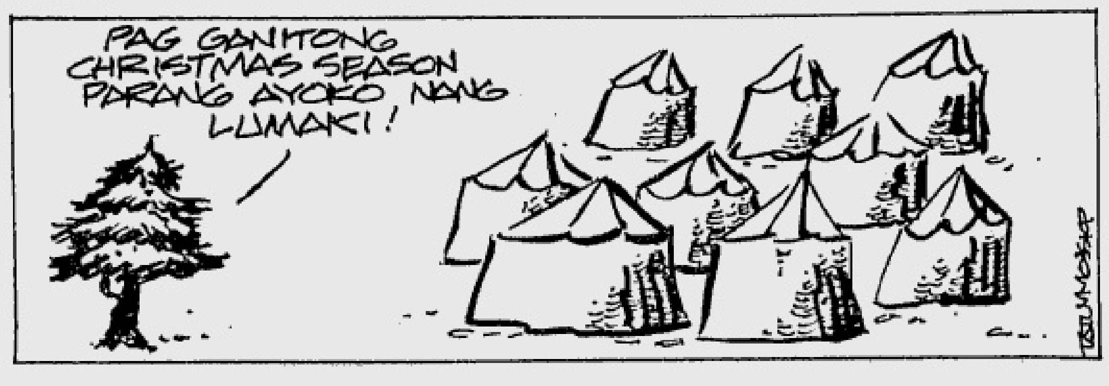
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PALIMOS PO!
CHRISTMAS GIFT KO SA YO, BARBIE DOLL!
O, BAKIT KA NAIIYAK?
MABUTI PA PO ITONG DOLL, MAGANDA ANG DAMIT!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PAG GANITONG CHRISTMAS SEASON PARANG AYOKO NANG LUMAKI!

Missy's new album proves she's hip-hop royalty

ELLIOT. Fervor for collaboration.

By Noelani Torre

MISSY Elliott grabbed our attention when we heard what she had to say in "One-Minute Man": "Take it off, show me what you got, 'cause I don't want no one-minute man." It was a novelty for us—female empowerment and the objectification of men in rap. Backed by a set of truly banging rhythms from producer Timbaland, the song went on to become a hit and its album, "Miss E... So Addictive," hit the multi-platinum mark.

Stagnation

Hip-hop was in danger of stagnation when Missy Elliott burst into the scene in 1997 with her first solo album, "Supa Dupa Fly." It provided the outrageous "femcee" with a still-to-be beaten formula: a team-up with rhythm master Timbaland.

He lent his skills to all Missy Elliott albums that followed—1999's "Da Real World," "Miss E... So Addictive," 2002's "Under Construction," and the most recent, "This Is Not A Test!" (Elektra/ Warner), released this month.

Raunchy and clever

Missy's raunchy and clever lyrics work so perfectly with Timbaland's funk-laden production that it's no surprise that all her albums have thus far been certified hits.

One thing that has remained constant is her fervor for collaboration. In earlier albums, she has worked with rap and hip-hop superstars like Busta Rhymes, Lil' Kim, Eminem, Jay-Z and Beyonce Knowles. Here, Missy ropes in outside talent in the form of Mary J. Blige, Jay-Z, Elephant Man, Fabolous, R. Kelly, Monica and Beenie Man, Nelly, and the Clark Sisters.

Difficult to pinpoint

"This Is Not A Test!" is another zinger of an album with a sound that is difficult to pinpoint, another Missy trademark, with songs ranging from rap and hip-hop to R&B. It's in her rap songs that her talent shines through, and not in her attempts at achieving blues diva status.

Opening number "Pass That Dutch" is one of the album's strongest pieces. A punchy track complemented by various thickeners like bells, whistles and handclaps, it will have you dancing up the walls if you aren't careful.

Wheels

Second track "Wake Up" is another gut-centered piece with more elevated sentiments. Here, we have Missy berating the hip-hop community and the rest of the indifferent, commercial-centric world. "Stop selling crack to the blacks," she raps. "If you don't got a gun/ It's alright/ If you're making legal money/ It's alright/ If you got to keep your clothes on/ It's alright/ If your wheels don't spin/ It's alright." In other words, wake up."

This song features Jay-Z, but the poor guy just can't hold his own against our Little Miss Elliott's rhyme-making. The same goes with the rest of the artists featured in this album—they tend to fade in comparison.

Among our favorite tracks are "Toyz" and "Let Me Fix My Weave," both of which deal with subjects that illustrate Missy's penchant for outrageousness.

Fake hair

The first song talks of adult toys (if you know what we mean) and the second one is about fake hair. Who else but Missy Elliott could sing about vibrators and fake hair, and make it all sound funny and empowering at the same time!

She is one of rap's biggest figures, and has been for the past seven years. "This Is Not A Test!" proves that not only does she deserve her current standing, but it also looks like she's not budging from her place for sometime yet.

SEAFCTV survey findings should lead to reforms

By Nestor U. Torre

LAST week, the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children's Television released the findings of its landmark study sponsored by Columbia International Food Products on program content on local free TV that is potentially disturbing to children. Negative factors tabulated and assessed during the two-week viewing survey included sexually suggestive content, objectification of women, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and sexually explicit material.

Irresponsible

These elements are deemed irresponsible and reprehensible because television is presumed to be sensitive to the fact that children may be watching at most times, particularly during the daytime and early-evening hours. Thus, it's important for most TV programs to be GP (General Patronage) fare, and not the PG (Parental Guidance) or even R (Restricted) material it sometimes is on the local boob tube these days.

Another basic quality of television is its being an intimate, personal medium that enters people's homes—unlike film, which is shown in theaters where viewership can more easily be controlled in terms of age and audience suitability.

Program content

Therefore, program content on TV has to be more rigorously and judiciously conceptualized at its source, so that it doesn't offend family members' sensibilities or disturb young viewers.

The SEAFCTV study shows that a number of TV people have been less than circumspect and responsible in their use of the medium, thus prompting parents and educators to worry about the effect of their infractions on vulnerable children.

Misgivings

In fact, some members of the TV industry have also expressed misgivings about the bad example some shows are setting for the country's impressionable young.

And some young viewers themselves have been crying ouch! and foul!, and hope that our TV people will more readily take cognizance of their responsibilities, without being forced to atone for their sins.

These four sectors—parents, educators, TV people and the youth themselves—are principally involved in the movement for reforms on television, but other elements like government, the church and civic leaders have to contribute to the effort to clean up our TV screens.

> It's important for most TV programs to be GP fare

This is where the SEAFCTV-Columbia study is of important use: It provides a factual basis for all sectors to react to, and on which to build their reforms. Thus, SEAFCTV should make the results of the study available to interested groups, so reform initiations can more objectively and pertinently be formulated.

It's also key that TV people shouldn't feel that the study is making them the villains in this complex situation. There are television workers who do responsible work. What the study focuses on are the infractions, and in no way does it accuse the entire industry of irresponsible work.

Shortcomings

It therefore behooves channel managers, who may be presumed to be among the more responsible members of their TV organizations, to analyze the study's findings in detail, pinpoint their networks' respective shortcomings, and undertake steps to correct those specific flaws or excesses.

We also trust that organizations of parents, educators, and youths, as well as government and other sectors, invite the foundations' officials to explain the details and ramifications of the study's findings to them, so that they can more productively frame their participation in the hopefully coordinated move to make television provide healthier viewing fare for our impressionable children.

All they want for Christmas

By Behn Cervantes

"ALL I want for Christmas is my two front teeth . . ." goes that comical Yuletide ditty meant for children. Since gifts are the focus for most youngsters, this little wish stands out because it isn't about toys and other things material.

Mundane wish

Instead, it is a personal and less mundane wish. It hints at growing pains and a less fey attitude about Christmas. Besides, the basis for wanting those two front teeth is really just to wish us all "A Merry Christmas!" It is surprisingly more adult and more giving, and it sweetly captures the true spirit of the season.

Yes, when youngsters become adults they think less of themselves and desire happiness for their family. By then they have internalized the adage that it is better to give than to receive.

For example, Mark Martinez, a young executive in Dumaguete, would rather not concern himself with material things. Instead, Mark says, "Christmas should be full of love."

PATAG. Master's degree.

Dasmariñas Village resident Nanette Tiongco Puyat, mother of six, says, "My heartfelt wish is for FPJ to back out of the coming elections." Again, she is thinking way beyond herself and family, and concerns herself instead with the family of man, in this particular case, the Philippines.

Entrepreneur

Marlene Suarez, an entrepreneur who has returned to the country after many years as a resident of the United States, wishes that since the present lot of presidentiables won't back out, we should field the likes of Hilario Davide for president and the feisty and principled Haydee Yorac for vice president. Obviously, politics is very much in the air this Christmas!

Another level

Raising it to another level, Rovi Marques of Cebu wishes that her family remains as close as it is now, for the rest of the year.

Singer-actress Cynthia Patag, after living a bucolic life in Molo, Iloilo for a couple of years, would rather concentrate on getting her Master's degree in Psychology so that she can more efficiently work as a clinical psychologist.

Grace Saguinsing of Bayan Muna wishes that there would be less *trapos* in power so that there would be more hope for this country this Christmas and in the coming years.

The greatest trait of Pinoys is our sense of humor. It makes us resilient, no matter how seemingly dire national conditions are. A Happy New Year to all people of goodwill!

3 SHOWS TODAY! 1 PM / 4:30 PM / 8 PM
"A VISUAL DELIGHT!...FANTASTIC!"
- Chiqui Roa Puno, TV Personality
"FANTASTIC SHOW! BEAUTIFUL! RECOMMENDED FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!" - Amb. Bienvenido Tantoco Jr.
PETRON CELEBRATES THE ENCHANTMENT - LIVE ON ICE!
DISNEY ON ICE
PRODUCED BY FELD ENTERTAINMENT
Disney's Beauty and the Beast
EXPERIENCE THE ENCHANTMENT - LIVE ON ICE ON
DEC. 23, 2003 UP TO JAN. 4, 2004
Tickets: P314, P575, P784, P993, P1,202
Ticket prices are inclusive of 4.5% service charge
SHOW SKED
Dec.26 - 4:30pm, 8pm
Dec.27 - 1pm, 4:30pm, 8pm
Dec.28 - 1pm, 4:30pm, 8pm
Dec.29 - 4:30pm, 8pm
Dec.30 - 1pm, 4:30pm, 8pm
Jan. 1 - 4:30pm, 8pm
Jan. 2 - 4:30pm, 8pm
Jan. 3 - 1pm, 4:30pm, 8 pm
Jan. 4 - 1pm, 4:30pm, 8pm
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TICKETNET CALL 911-5555
Gen. Admission tickets of P105 will be on sale on the day of the show.
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BEYBLADE

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BEYBLADE YEAR-END CUP
Shangri-La Plaza Mall Grand Atrium
December 28
Sunday, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm
PRIZES AT STAKE
SINGLES CATEGORY
1st: P10,000 Cash Prize
P5,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
2nd: P5,000 Cash Prize
P3,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
3rd: P3,000 Cash Prize
P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
4th: P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
TEAM CATEGORY
1st: P6,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
2nd: P4,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
3rd: P3,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
4th: P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy
presented by JACK-JILL Roller Coaster
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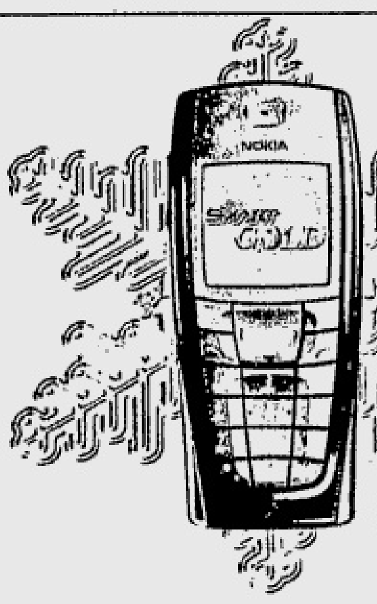
Sony Ericsson T610
FREE @ Plan 1995



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Nokia 6600
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SMART Amazing Phone
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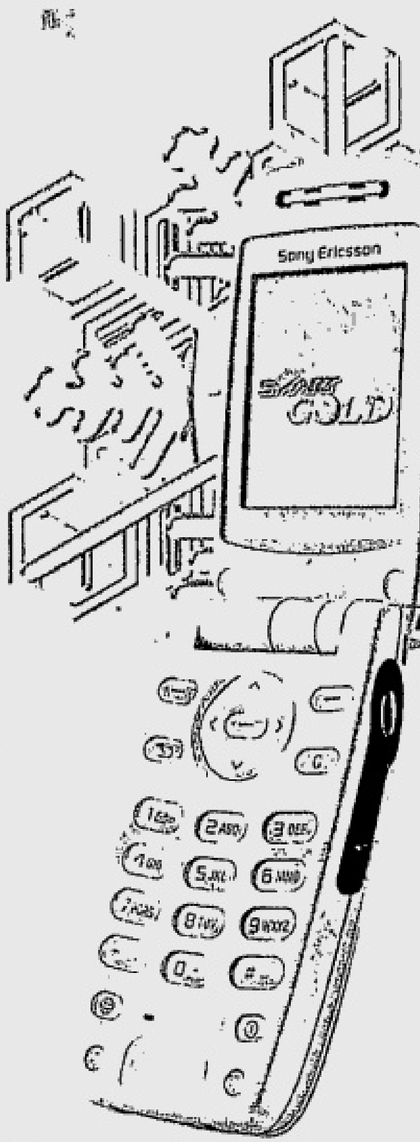

Sony Ericsson Z600
FREE @ Plan 1995

BlackBerry
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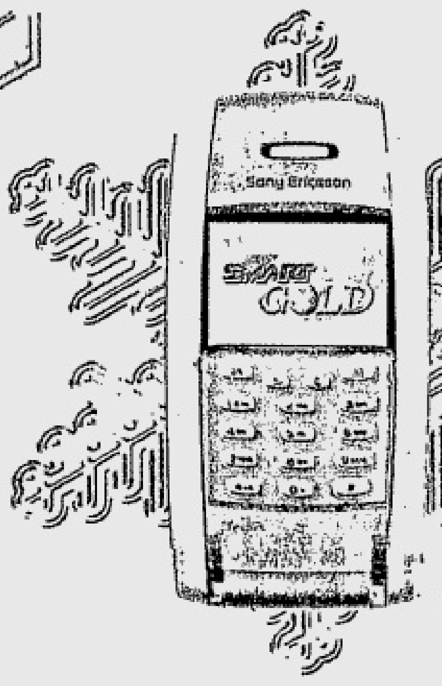

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Ruffa reviews Mano Po 2 page F4
New Year's Revolutions page H2
Cher Calvin caught with Paris Hilton page G3
Angel Aquino, crying lady page F3

Rubber Ducky, you're so fine

SWAK!

by Lex

THE WHOLE Kris-and-Joey fiasco has come and gone, and through it all one important detail was overlooked. Despite already having one child out of wedlock (by another married man), the fact that the woman caught an STD meant that she still was having unprotected sex. Apparently some people take longer than others to learn their lesson.

Rabbit country

When I walk through squatter communities and see kids, kids, and more kids in every nook and cranny, it's easy to see that Kris and Joey are not alone in their lack of foresight. Adoption centers are bursting at the seams and our population figures continue to skyrocket. For many, sex is the *libangan* of choice, the best escape from the problems of the real world.

As we speak, Pinoys of every age, creed and economic class are making babies. Especially in the provinces where there are constant blackouts, or no electricity to begin with, people have nothing better to do than breed like rabbits.

Good girls gone wild

Parents, please skip this part if you aren't ready to face the truth.

Your children, even those you have put in exclusive Catholic schools, are having sex, and there's nothing you can do about it.

Thus, kids are having kids. And some compound the problem by getting married, as if that is supposed to miraculously make the situation okay.

Both the church and the government, full of good intentions, have offered several "ingenious" solutions to address this national crisis. For couples who want to stop the baby train there is the Rhythm Method. I'd like to see barangay officials try to teach this to a group of men and women (it takes two to tango) in the suburbs of Jolo. It's hard enough to get these macho men into a room, but close to impossible to have them learn the intricacies of the female cycle. After months of monitoring their wives' periods and figuring out when it's safe to "do it," all these merry men (and women) have to do is ... abstain! (Abstain?! *Ano 'yon?!*)

For young souls experimenting with carnal desires, the same "clever" option is proposed: abstinence. You just gotta hold it in kids, pray a lot, and avoid all occasions that lead to temptation. Sung to the tune of that irritating song "Let's Get Loud," all the holy rollers out there should be taught to sing in unison "Lets get real, lets get real, yeah!"

I love you, Ducky

There are three problems that continue to cripple our economy: corruption, the lack of a decent education system, and overpopulation. Unlike the first two predicaments that would take Herculean efforts to fix, overpopulation requires a simple solution: distribute condoms.

Sure, we can preach from our soapboxes about natural birth control and how "true love waits" but until we face the facts, nothing is going to change. We can choose to look away while the problem (as in that 1980s classic, "The Blob") devours everything in its path.

Condoms cost five measly pesos each. That's all it takes to address the issue. More than the money though, there is a tremendous moral hurdle to overcome. Teenage girls are taught they should be ashamed to ask for Trust at the local drugstore. But what is more embarrassing—buying a rubber, or having a kid before your 18th birthday? Until the shame disappears, the crappy status quo will prevail.

San Francisco, gay capital of the world, curbed the spread of AIDS through education, information, and openness—qualities that are hard to come by, given that our Catholicism-infused guilt has been hammered in through generations of conditioning.

Ipe and Kris, Zoren and Carmina, Aga and Janice, and many others we see on the silver screen have had to deal with unplanned pregnancies, something that happens to many of their fans as well. Some of these admirers raise families recklessly, spawning six, seven, or even eight little Indians. And its toll on our collective existence is extremely heavy. To think fixing the problem takes all of five bucks. Heck, that's cheaper than a soft drink.

(I love getting feedback. Whether you love me or hate me, that's okay. Pop me an e-mail at swak@info.com.ph.)

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NERI CHRISTMAS! Says Victor Neri

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DYE HARD. Lola Armida sings, "Aawitan Kita"

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FILIPINAS. Maric Soriano and Aiko Melendez at the premiere

DITO AT DAWN. Dawn Zulueta Lagdameo at the premiere

GOMA NO PO! Ri Gomez's S files

The F word

Photos by Rudy Espéras

IT COULD have been just another premiere night. But for a lot of people, it wasn't. A number of individuals in the film and media industry have spoken passionately about Filipinas the movie. It ignites hope, some of them said.

Filipinas spins the contemporary tale of a middle-class family. The story was given flavor by the diverse personalities of its different members, while the touches of social issues and events makes it even richer.

The film is rife with drama and symbolism, with each character representing a different sector in our country.

There's a spinster, a US immigrant, a struggling businesswoman, an OFW, an activist, a soldier.

We might just watch. Why not?

We all need a dose of hope.

24K Karylle

MR. SUAVE AND LT. Rudy Fernandez and Lorna Tolentino

DADDY DAY CARE. Dolphy, Nicole and Zsa Zsa

SHARMA ATTRAC Sharmai Arnaiz

THE CABINET. Susan Roces, FPJ, Tessa Valdes and Sen. Loren Legarda

COUPLE. na Villaroel nd Zoren Legaspi

SENATOR AND MRS. Franklin and Mila Drilon

HIP, HIP, HOORAY! Chyna Hortaleza and Richard Gutierrez

GOLDEN GLORY. Gina De Venecia, Mother Lily Monteverde and Marichu Vera Perez

Red or Dead

By Tim Yap
Photos by Tessa Prieto-Valdes

IMMORTAL. That's how this film will go down in Philippine showbiz history. Fine performances, breathtaking cinematography, a soundtrack infused with Chinese (sung by Zsa Zsa Padilla), a gripping story line, and Mother Lily's marketing muscle.

Erik Matti's opus reeks of memorable scenes and quotable lines that will rival classics such as, "You are nothing but a second rate, trying hard, copy cat!" or "Bitch! Double bitch!"

Try Zsa Zsa's heavily Chinese accented "Ako legal wife! Akin corner lot, kanya side lot lang!" and a lot more emotion-filled dialogue.

The film finds its intensity in moments of silence instead of resorting to the usual hysterics that has made Pinoy films a cliche.

Hands down one of the best films of the year, if not of the decade, Mano Po 2 is a must see.

W
Sa

Original gift ideas and other dis

Man about town

Chuck Dy!

Dear Man About Town,

This Christmas, I want to give my girlfriend something truly original. We have been going steady for several years and we may get married soon. In the past, I have given her many gifts, but this year, I'm looking for a really unique present to show that I love her very much. Do you have any suggestions?

IN THE LATE 1980s, shock-rock musical monsters GWAR hosted one of their signature concerts somewhere in Middle America.

Aside from showcasing an arsenal of ear-splitting songs bordering on cacophony, GWAR was in full-battle regalia, sporting costumes straight out of your favorite nightmare. At one point, the lead singer defecated on stage, picked up a piece of his poop, and snarled menacingly into the microphone, "Who wants some of this?" Amazingly, some deranged fanatics shrieked their affirmation and were thus pelted with excrement. Talk about shit hitting the fans. The moral of this story is twofold: some people like bizarre things; and, never buy front row tickets to a GWAR concert.

Christmas is a special time of the year when the world forgets that it suffers from a self-destructive complex. Lights adorn the metropolis, special delicacies are prepared, soporific hymns waft through the air, and gifts are exchanged. The latter characteristic of the holiday season often causes the most stress as people attempt to balance budget and personalization. Who is on my Christmas list this year? How much do I spend for each person? Do I still have fruitcake from last year's office party to barter off?

The top slot on the list is obviously reserved for that special someone who ranks above all, and deserves the most personalized attention and the most generous slice of funding. Given that this is a predominantly Christian country, you'd think it would be Jesus. But since He has no use for a cardigan, we focus instead on the girlfriend, the boyfriend, the best friend, the spouse, the *kabit*—that person who, more than anyone else, makes us feel good about ourselves.

Being creative when selecting presents has always been an interesting challenge. Of course, we all want to give remarkable and memorable gifts. But a truly original gift requires more than fertile imagination or sizeable budget. It demands a thorough understanding of the recipient's personality and the relationship between the two of you. How did you meet? Is she allergic to shrimp? Does she smell a bit like shrimp? Specific inquiry minimizes the chances of giving a gift that is embarrassingly bereft of practical or sentimental value. One Christmas, I received a Play-Doh molding set from an older relative. I was 23.

Consider that there is absolutely nothing wrong with buying generic gifts either, as long as they are well thought of. That's "generic" in the sense that there is a possibility, however miniscule, that another person could make the same purchase.

So what? In my experience, most women enjoy gifts that are bought. Meaning, the product enjoys a standard of quality, has practical use, and can be exchanged at a future date. There is quite an array of unique stuff on sale nowadays, ranging from handicrafts to signed memorabilia. I myself wouldn't mind receiving something generic. I'll take a cool pair of shoes over a lap dance by a stripper on any day! Except Wednesdays when entrance is free in P. Burgos joints.

On the other hand, I do understand that generic gifts can be a source of humiliation. Once, I bought a life-size teddy bear for my girlfriend (I had to pay extra jeepney fare for the abomination) and two minutes before I offered it to her, she warned me *never* to give her a stuffed toy. We are no longer together.

The only way to ensure true originality is by actually creating something or to acquire a one-of-a-kind item. Artistic talent and/or deep pockets are helpful reservoirs to tap into. But what about the majority of the population suffering creative mediocrity and re-

"BUT darling, that really happens when it's cold!"

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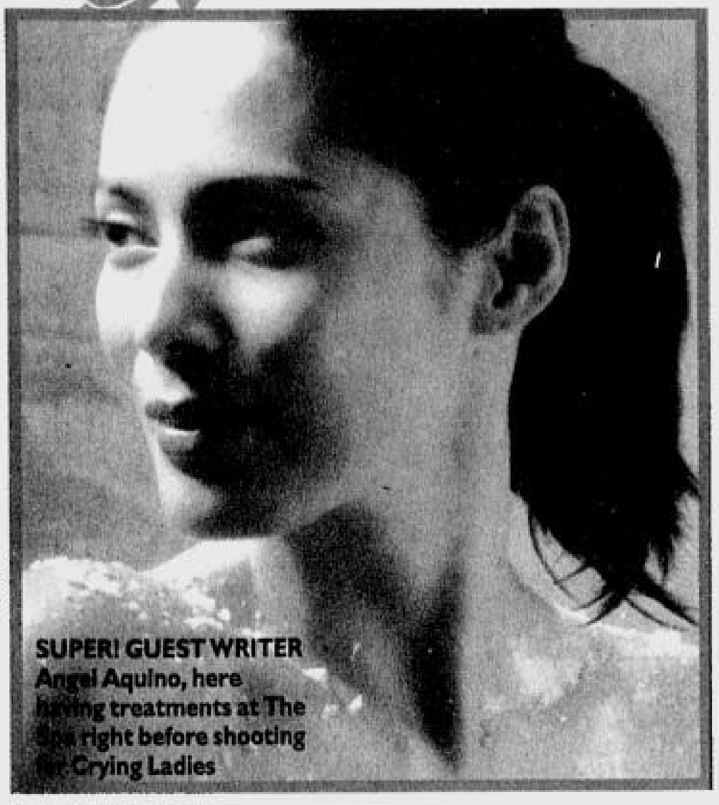

SUPER! GUEST WRITER Angel Aquino, here having treatments at The Spa right before shooting for Crying Ladies

What's good about the movie is that it's a satire on life, how things are in this country, our culture and everyday living.

Behind the tears

By Angel Aquino
As told to Tim Yap

IT WAS a totally different experience—I can compare it to how I felt when I did my first movie.

I was able to work with two actors that I look up to—Hilda Coronel, whom my former manager Jeffrey Jeturian would always rave about, and my idol, Sharon Cuneta.

In the past, I have watched Hilda Coronel in Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag, Insiang (her best film to date) and Itim.

I've looked up to Sharon since I was a kid—as in, I'm a die hard fan. Every Sharon movie was a family affair. The peak was during Maging Sino ka Man, where I fell in line on the first day of its showing with the rest of Baguio City. I'm really a Sharonian.

TH makeup master Henri Calayag of H lon at a Lifestyle shoot

Our first movie together was Minsan Minahal Kita but unfortunately, we didn't have scenes together. Now with Crying Ladies, we were blessed with so many chances to work together—light scenes where we can be relaxed and just let go and not the heavy confrontational ones typical in movies this side of tinseltown.

Crying Ladies was an eye opener for me since I found out that they really do hire mourners to cry during the wakes of complete strangers.

It tackles the life of Stella, played by Sharon. She's sly and will make money out of whatever—a racketeer in short. She was in jail for a year and lost custody of her child. Now she has to prove herself to her son.

Doray, Hilda's character, is a forgotten, washed up B movie actress who can't get over that she was a star before, so she rubs it in all the time. Doray's last role was that of a *taumbayan na inapakan ng higante* in "Darna and the Giants."

Choleng, my role is that of a very religious person—she serves in a church and is dedicated to a foundation. But she cannot forgive herself, because she sleeps with a married man. Every time she sleeps with him, she goes to confession. Then she realizes that it's not enough to just do *"Ama Namin"*—she has to do charity work. And that's when the mourning comes in.

In a way this film is all about irony. Stella to mourn for a dead person whom she does not know, Doray to regain her former glory and Choleng to be absolved.

What's good about the movie is that it's a satire on life, how things are in this country, our culture and everyday living.

It makes fun of how people struggle, but in a way that doesn't offend or patronize them.

Struggling is very relative. When we look at somebody toiling—in our eyes, we think they re suffering, but somehow they're having fun while doing all that work.

During the first day of shooting, I was just in my corner, scared. In our first scene, we had to cry together in a cemetery, which served as a good icebreaker. I'm sure they didn't need it—but I did. We were just wailing (without tears, thus, more of a comedy than a drama) the whole time.

The makeshift *funeraria* was set in Unitel, our production house where we worked with very professional people. It was a different atmosphere and working relationship.

When I learned the director was Mark Meilly—I accepted the job right away. Everyone was having fun—our director was so kind to everyone—*wala siyang sinisigawan*. He's always *nagpapatawa*.

Behind the sad sounding title is a light hearted film full of learning experiences.

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The following are attempts at
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en crate with a card around
her neck that read, "Surprise!"

In Cancun, Mexico, a teen-aged boy with *amor* in his heart and tequila in his veins scaled the walls surrounding his girlfriend's house dressed as Santa Clause. He was spotted by a policeman and ordered to come down. Instead of complying or explaining himself, the young man decided to make a leap for the adjoining rooftop. His heavy red Santa suit and fake belly did not help, and gravity did the rest. He smeared the sidewalk like a bowl full of jelly.

Suffice to say, love makes us do ridiculous things. You should be careful not to overexert yourself or risk doing something you'll regret later on. Just because nobody else has ever done it before doesn't guarantee it will be a good gift, anyway.

You can't get more unique than wrapping up a severed human head, but can she show it off to her friends?

The best gift I ever gave a girlfriend was a good laugh. It was refreshing, affordable and remarkably original. It made us realize that the most important thing about the Holiday season is to cherish what we had in each other, our nuances and history as a couple, and that what we shared could not be bought or duplicated. The next year, I attempted the same gift. We are no longer together.

(E-mail the author at bohemiansamurai@yahoo.com)

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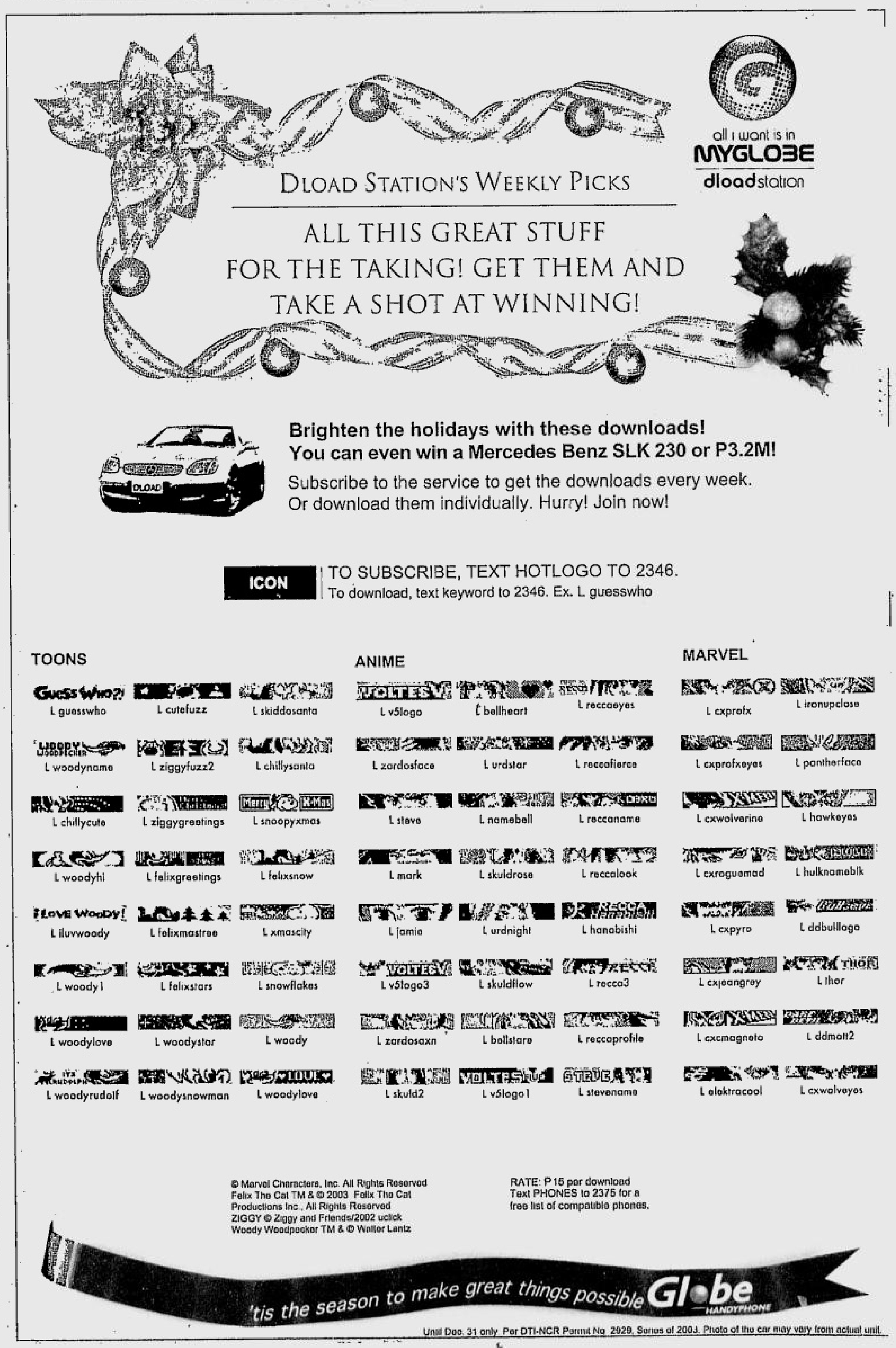

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MANO POE ON FRONT ROW. F[illegible] president, FPJ)

Love destroys, love restores

'Mano Po 2' is a showcase of powerhouse acting by both veterans and younger performers

By Ruffa Gutierrez
Photos By Tessa Prieto-Valdes

THE STORYLINE of "Mano Po 2" is reminiscent not only of a Philippine *teleserye* but, sad to say, also of every day life in these parts—a man with more than one wife.

But what's distinctly memorable are the characters depicted in the movie and the actors that played them. As always, Christopher De Leon essays his part well, this one of a dutiful son who had no recourse but to marry his betrothed, a Chinese girl named Lui Tsu. Zsa Zsa Padilla's performance as this girl stands out in my book.

Kris Aquino as the young Susan Roces is okay, but I don't quite see the rationale behind her becoming Susan Roces later on, while the two other wives were played by the same actresses through adulthood. Perhaps the writer meant to show that Kris had a harder life, as she was poorer and had more children.

In any case, I believe Susan Roces was a good choice for the role. Not only is she known for sweetness; her integrity and good heart shine through in every situation.

Lorna Tolentino as the third and last wife is most convincing. It is obvious that the years have been kind to LT. She looks so beautiful onscreen—any man would be drawn by such a sight!

The younger performers are also good, most especially Judy Ann Santos, whose expressive eyes brought tears to my eyes a few times. Jay Manalo is also effective. But I think Alessandra da Rossi's role is half-baked, a pity since she is an excellent actress. Chynna and Karylle's roles are cute. Cogie Domingo's acting is a little restrained. but not to be biased or anything, but I think Richard Gutierrez's acting is a revelation; he's really come a long way from his *bagets* roles.

All in all the film has one message for me: Love can hurt, love cam maim and destroy, but at the same time, true love restores.

SUPER'S OWN PARIS HILTON. Ruffa Gutierrez, guest reviewer

MOTHER with daughter Roselle Monteverde

MOTHER AND LILY. Tessa goes Oriental Sea Princess in Rajo Laurel, here with Mother Lily Monteverde

MORNING GIRLS AT NIGHT. Korina Sanchez and Kris Aquino at the premiere of Mano Po 2

Soul proprietor

By Martin Valdes
Contributor

> *Yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?"—Hamlet, William Shakespeare*

THIRTY pieces of silver.

Two millennia ago, this sum was considerable luxury: one could finish one's pad in pine wood, pay for a Mediterranean vacation, or take a lifetime subscription to "The Fisherman's Quarterly." But it was also the biggest bargain ever transacted. The fact that Judas Iscariot had not an inkling that ... the Man he sold was worth so much more than silver, aggravates me! Makes my horns itch. Most presume that Judas is being punished in hell for Divine Treason. I think it is for incredible stupidity.

Now, two millennia later, the economic repercussions of that singular incident are still causing tremors in the stock markets of the Underworld. It used to be so simple. Hell, like any other civilized society, depends largely on the economic architecture of trade, the most common commodity being the human soul. But when Iscariot put a price tag on the priceless ... let's just say, all hell broke loose. The price of an everyday, moderately-sinful human soul hit rock-bottom and most were crated off by the millions to bargain centers around the universe. Many notable residents of Hell lost their fortunes and relocated to Idaho. The only souls worth investing in were saints, martyrs and virgins—and these were as rare as first edition Beanie Babies. Remember the Black Plague, the Inquisition and all the Great Wars? Clearance sales.

Devil's Advocate

The arduous task of re-establishing order in the system has been assigned to me, a sophomore Economics student at the Universidad de Inferno (the most prestigious abyssal academy this side of the Styx, I might add—we've produced a legion of advocates and three American presidents). While all my friends are taking up appropriately devilish courses such as Theatre, Pain Appreciation and Sado-Masochism 101, I'm stuck with contemplating currency control for the damned. A square in the Circles of Hell, you might say.

First things first, then.

What makes for a valuable soul? It is an ancient misconception that the worth of a human soul has something to do with its moral alignment: the more good deeds you rack up, the more notches to scratch into the soul pole. Sorry to disappoint, but morality only determines the soul's final destination and resting place, not its worth in the metaphysical stock market. Obviously the rosters of heaven will be crammed with impressively holy resumes—of men who have suffered diligently for the sake of something nauseatingly noble, of women who have exulted life, of children who weren't popular as teens but still managed to get through puberty without resorting to random violence. And obviously, the Yearbook of Tartarus boasts alumni who have raped, murdered, pillaged, committed genocide, stolen from their fellowman, blasphemed, and watched "Titanic" more than once.

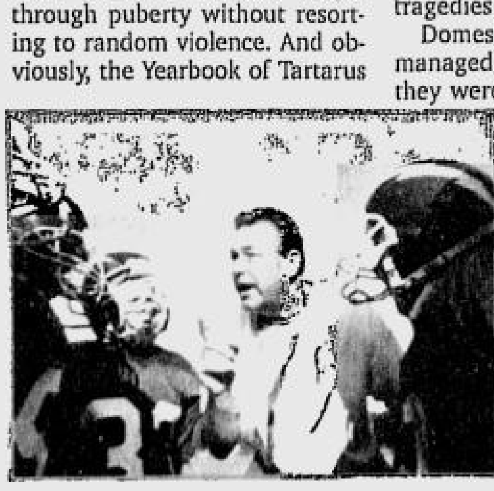
> The more good deeds you rack up, the more notches you scratch into the spirit pole—but not in the metaphysical stock market.

But just because a soul is adjudged good or evil does not qualify it as worthy or worthless. The soul is merited on its ultimate impact on mankind; on its effect, lasting or otherwise, on the environment it was unleashed upon. History is inundated with human deeds and misdemeanors down to the minute details, and every single being is a cause and effect. As my Antipathy professor (that old goat) used to say, "The soul is a word in the conversation of truth." Thus, you can think of the worth of a soul in terms of linguistic accuracy: how much did that single word affect the meaning and clarity of the whole sentence, paragraph, chapter or novel?

Soul What?

The afterlife brims over with the ghosts of men waiting for their souls to be valuated and bid upon. One reason for this is, there are just too many people dying at the same freakin' time! Can't you idiots look both ways before crossing a street? Another reason for all this metaphysical traffic is that soul-pricing is getting to be an extremely complicated process. It used to be infinitely simple: "Death, Life Review, Priced at so-and-so, Consume before August 3000." But ever since the sale of JC, the afterlife just hasn't been the same. The amount of bureaucratic hoopla involved is enough to make a Muslim speak Yiddish. I hate red tape. In fact, screw tape!

To increase efficiency, I propose to sector souls into four general categories: Global, Domestic, Ineffectual and Unrealized. Globals are the most valuable of commodities, the rare ones who attained immortality by affecting world history and heritage. Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and Martin Luther King are just a few of these souls whose actions, philosophies or innovations have steered the helm of the Life boat. But even Kublai Khan, Alexander of Macedonia, Julius Caesar, Idi Amin and Adolf Hitler have achieved Global status through their infamy and notoriety. History has as much to learn from its tragedies as from its triumphs.



Domestics—those who have managed, in whatever capacity they were capable of, to impress their presence upon their immediate environment—make up a major chunk of the afterlife demography. Teachers, parents, politicians, spurned lovers, celebrities, spouses, best friends ... just about anyone who has achieved any

SOUL/ G3

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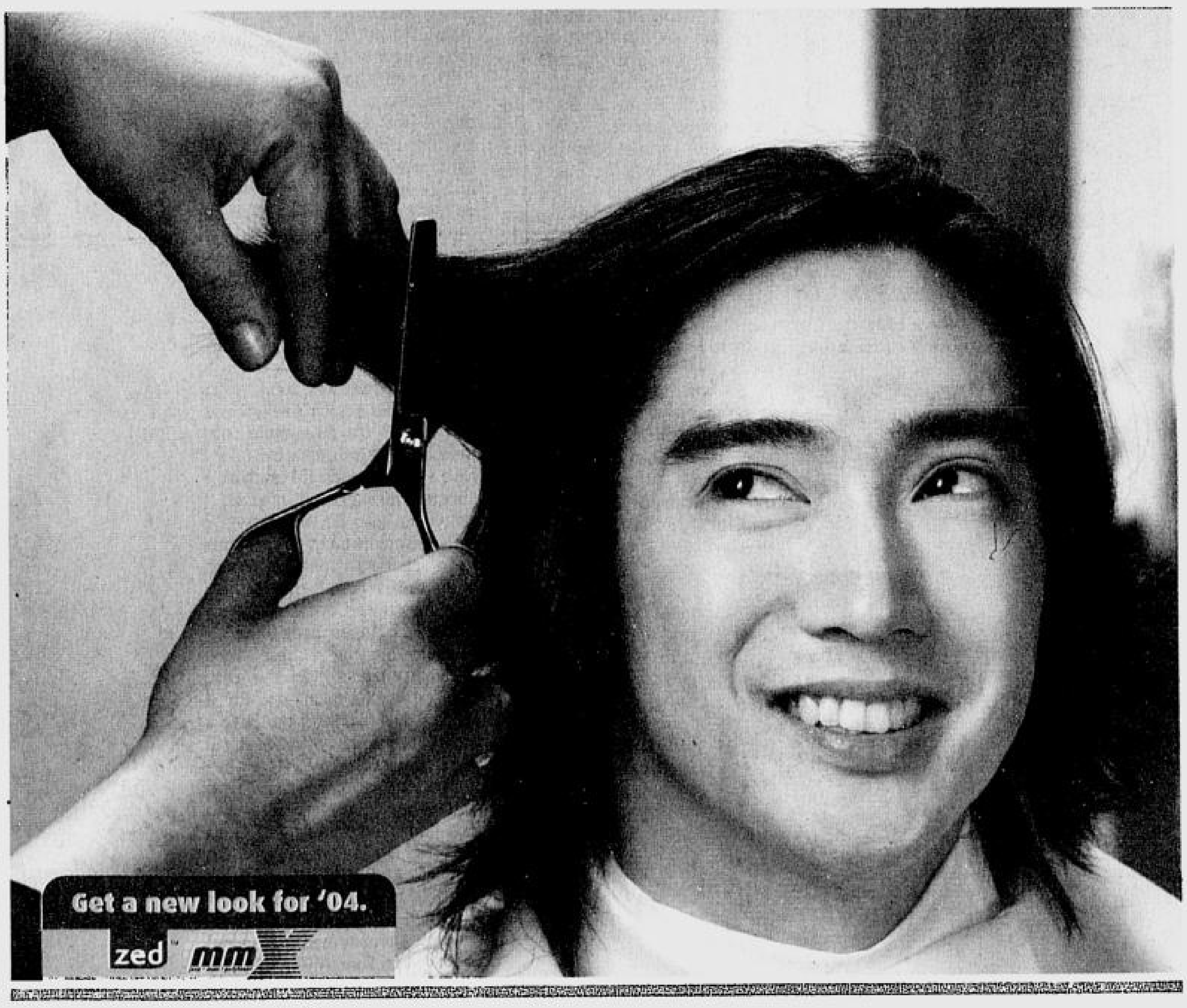

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SMART Simply Amazing!

RUFFA, LORIN, ANNABELLE AND EDDIE. W[illegible]th the whole Gutierrez brood [illegible] Ritchie Paul, Roc[illegible] Tonton, Ramon Christophe[illegible]hard, Raymond and E[illegible]

MAKE A WISH, RUFFA. Tessa Prieto-Valdes looks up to Ruffa Gutierrez.

Ruffa's child

Photos by Philip Sison

Tim Yap

A PASTEL paradise of multi-colored balloons and an even more motley mix of guests welcomed the first born daughter of **Ruffa** and **Yilmaz. Lorin Gabriella Bektas** was welcomed in a glitz blitz fit for show biz royalty.

At the Loft in Rockwell, the Bridesmaids and Co. transformed the place into one big, candy coated wonderland. Ninang **Tessa Prieto-Valdes** came as herself—a fairy godmother, with wings! She whispered Lorin blessings of a happy life fit for a fairy tale.

"I grant you three wishes. One—only designer clothes and shoes will adorn your body. Two, the finest jewelry that money can buy. And three, a prince charming who can afford the first two wishes."

Tessa was clairvoyant enough to predict the first wish.

"She was supposed to wear an Inno Sotto, but it was too big, since she wasn't able to fit," says Ruffa, who was swathed in a pink Inno dress. "I got her a pink Christian Dior, but she hated it. She hates formal dresses. She likes it casual—sundresses, pajamas, just relaxed clothing." Don't worry Ruffa, it's just a phase. When she reaches two, she'll learn to appreciate formal designer gowns. We've all gone through that.

So for this coming out party, mom Ruffa decked Lorin out in a Burberry dress and red Gucci shoes that brother **Raymond** (yes, one of the twins) bought for her.

"*Sana gusto ko, maging Catholic ang apo ko. Pumayag na si Yilmaz pero binawi niya, hindi pa siya dumating!*" said the always memorable grandma Rama.

"We didn't have a religious ceremony, because I promised Yilmaz that it was just a welcome party and a dedication ceremony," Ruffa continues as she introduces Yilmaz's sister **Kesra** to the crowd of political, society and showbiz A-listers that had gathered to give Lorin their good tidings.

"Since your mom is Miss World, I wish you ... world peace. And that you grow taller than me and **Jules** (Ledesma) combined," says Ninong **Ogie Alcasid.**

After the final count, Lorin had 25 sets of godparents. Originally it was only 22 sets but three more pairs were added. "Gosh, what can I do? I have a lot of friends. If I can have a hundred *ninongs* and *ninangs*, I would. But hello, I'm still gonna give birth a few more times, so I'm saving my other friends for that." Which means there is hope for me yet.

At the far end of the room, my eye caught **Angeli Pangilinan-Valenciano** hugging a fresh faced **Gretchen Barretto.** In the past, these two had a falling out. But if Muslims and Catholics can have a baby, a reconciliation between old friends is possible.

Speaking of Angeli, she gave Ruffa a *bayong* (native bag). "You have too many Guccis and Louis Vuittons, so I wanted to be unique." And unlike Guccis and LVs, you can never have too many *bayongs*.

The sumptuous food was catered by **Margarita Fores,** the huge installation art of a cake was by **Heny Sison.** Later, Ruffa gave out baby shoe pendants as souvenir for the guests.

To the uninitiated, such lavish preparations might seem a bit ostentatious. But to those who are familiar with Ruffa's lifestyle, this was not showing off. Just simple showmanship, which is the way she was raised—in the center of the limelight.

Mother and daughter left for Istanbul to spend the holidays with Yilmaz. They will then head to Cyprus, where the Bektases own a beach resort.

Hopefully to live happily ever after.

FAIRY GODMOTHER. Tessa Prieto Valdes in a Rajo Laurel hugs godchild Lorin, in Burberry

LADIES IN THE HOUSE. Charlene Muhlach, Cher Calvin and Super! columnist Tina Pamintuan

NINANGS Baby Arenas, Nikki Coseteng and Mayor Vilma Santos

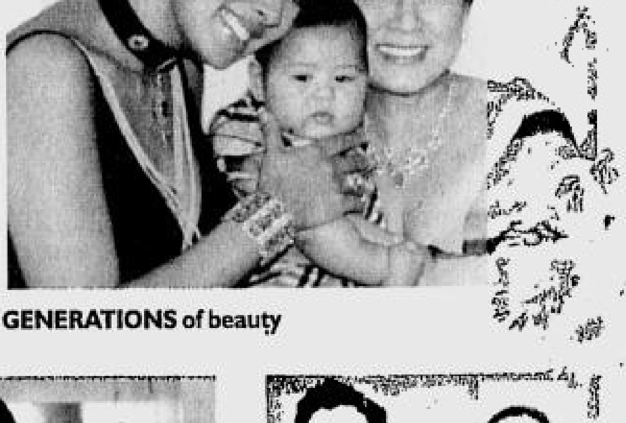
GRETCHEN THE GREAT. Gretchen Barretto shines

MR ENERGY WITH BABY ENERGY. Gary V gives his blessings to Lorin

OH RUFFA! *Andito po tayo ngayon sa The Loft para sa pinaka-dedication day ng aking anak na si Lorin...*

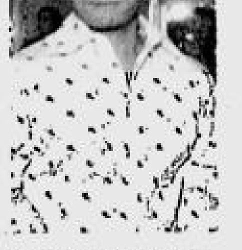
SWEET CHILD OF MINE. Ninang Donita Rose with Lorin

BUNDLE OF JOY. Ruffa feeds Lorin her milk. Here with Kesra, sister of Yilmaz



GENERATIONS of beauty

MIKE CHECK. La Greta and Pops Fernandez



HEIGHT IS MIGHT. Captain Barbel, aka Ogie Alcasid

SHOWBIZ ROYALTY. Richard and Lucy Gomez

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LOLA O BAYONG. Grandma Annabelle with Ruffa and her magic *bayong*

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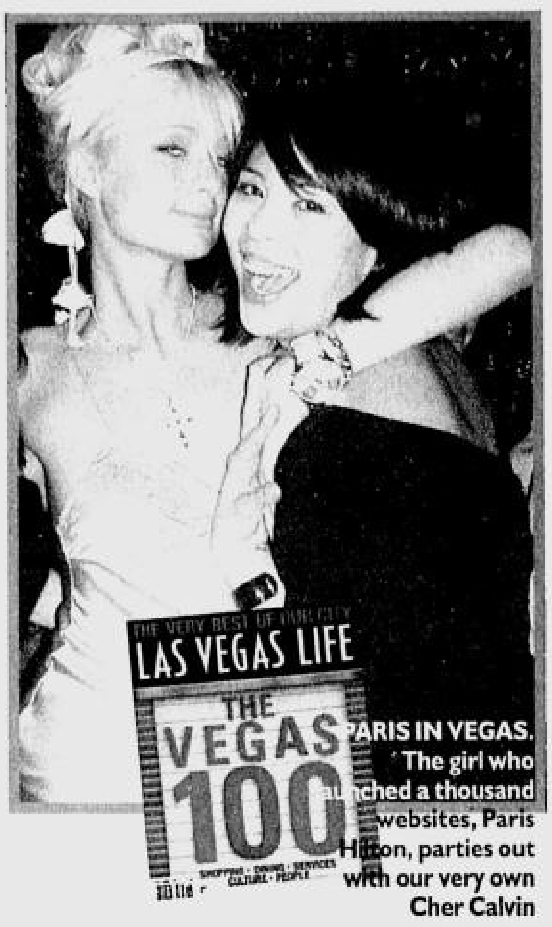
Foxy Cher Calvin



PARIS IN VEGAS. The girl who launched a thousand websites, Paris Hilton, parties out with our very own Cher Calvin

By Tim Yap

GUESS who made it to the Las Vegas 100 list?

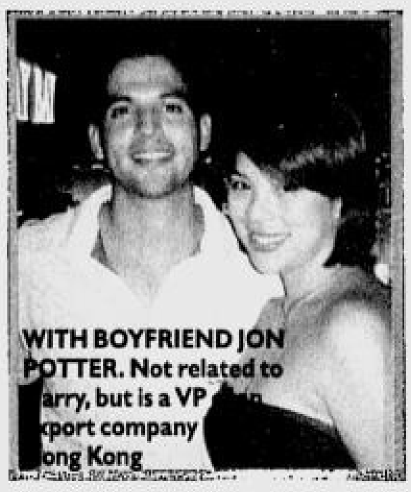
Barely a year since she flew off to pursue her world domination plans via the Fox Network, Cher Calvin has hit it big time with US viewers, landing on the top of the list of favorites under the category of "Media" in the Las Vegas Life—another first for the New York-bred Filipina.

The magazine lists her as "The Best Person To Wake Up To" in their December 2003 issue. Here's an excerpt: "Yes, we think she's a cutie patootie. But we'll bet we Cher this passion with more than a few viewers. Cher Calvin, who sits, and reports prettily with with co-hosts Josh Talkington and Ted Pretty from 5 to 9 every a.m. on KWU Channel 5 is an effective inducement to pry open those bleary poppers and start the ignition on your day."

The Vegas mag proceeds to enumerate things we all know about Miss Calvin—her dad, her website, even how she loves her man—"I'm super *malambing!*" The US magazine didn't have a clue what the word meant—but because of Cher, they said they were willing to find out.

WITHOUT A DOUBT. Cher with Gwen Stefani

CHE[illegible]ING T[illegible] [illegible]E. With [illegible] daughte[illegible] [illegible]ar of Pa[illegible] "The Si[illegible]



WITH BOYFRIEND JON POTTER. Not related to [illegible]arry, but is a VP [illegible] [illegible]xport company [illegible]ong Kong

Soul proprietor

From page G1

amount of significance in another person's life attains Domestic status. When Michael Jackson passes away, I expect there will be lengthy discussion among the scholars to determine his cachet as Global or Domestic.

Ineffectuals, as the name implies, are those who have chosen the path of lethargy or general inaction. These are people who neglect the potential granted them and, instead, waste away in front of a television set, nursing a beer and watching the Synchronized Swimming Men's Final because they are too lazy to get up and switch channels. They haven't affected anyone else, and they aren't trying. Ineffectuals are sold in economy boxes and used to fertilize the golf courses of Purgatory.

Lastly, we have the Unrealized—simply put, the souls of the living. These are the most volatile of all stock. Generally, bidding for a soul cannot take place until after its reception into the afterlife. But speculative investment is what makes the stock market work, and so, we observe with keen interest the lives of men, noting the myriad possibilities that arise from his everyday choices. The reason Unrealized souls are volatile is that much of their worth is latent, and can change by the hour. It has been documented with some frequency that a congenital barfly, seemingly on the familiar road to Ineffectuality, will on his deathbed make peace with his estranged family, or disprove the Big Bang theory, consequently increasing his worth into Domestic or even Global status! That is why the most observed souls in existence are those of newborn babies; their potential is infinite.

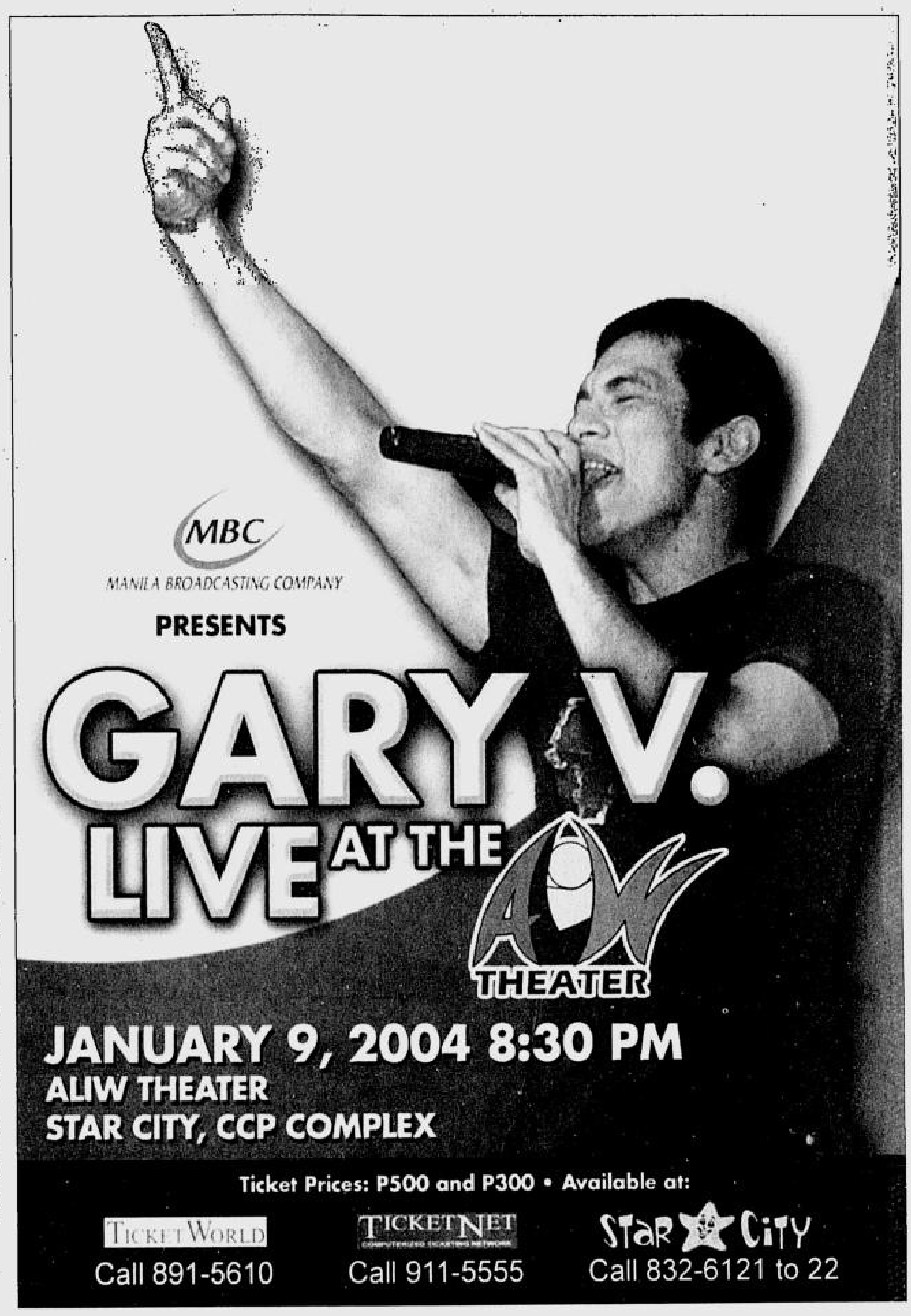
Denominations are ...

My final obstacle is to update the standard currency of trade in hell. Of no importance here is money and other material goods—except green M&Ms which are a coveted delicacy. I propose to valuate the human soul in terms of its weight in human memory. The more a human soul is remembered post-mortem, the more valuable it is. Thus Global souls are immortalized in history and text, Domestics are eulogized and celebrated, Ineffectuals are forgotten, and the Unrealized are still proving their worth.

As I sit back and listen to the Bee Gees and review my proposals before I submit it for academic scrutiny, I wonder: Should I invest in a few Unrealized souls, buy some safe Domestics, save up for a juicy Global, or simply go into the fertilizer business with hoards of Ineffectuals? As a truly Global soul once asked: "What is this quintessence of dust?"

The human soul, who can understand it? Who can predict the grandeur it can scale, or foresee the folly it will succumb to? I'm just a minor demon trying to make tail-ends meet. Life in hell could be worse, I suppose. At least the Backstreet Boys aren't here yet.

(E-mail author at lasengnomad@yahoo.com)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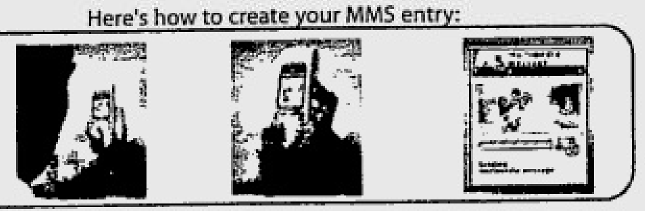

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Better daze ahead

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

A YEAR ago, I did not clap when my plane landed in Manila.

For it was the end of my Australian sojourn, the end of my first experience living on my own in another country.

Every day in Sydney was always a new, exhilarating experience. Whether it was walking up the Sydney Opera House for the first time, catching the trademark "No worries!" catchphrase, or even just sipping cappuccino in an obscure little café where people can play chess and their own CDs. It was not simply being in such a beautiful city that did it for me; it was the easygoing atmosphere and lifestyle that made my life there feel perfect. I loved the fact that I could go to clubs and bars wearing *tsinelas* and see wild young things in their chillaxed, dressed-down selves, clad in T-shirts and board shorts, and yet manifesting the true meaning of partying: simply, people with a shared love of good music and laughter coming together to exchange energies. In Sydney, I made lifelong friends with young people from all over, most especially with Scandanavians, Aussies and Latinos.

Most of all, I was crazy-happy knowing that the beach was a mere 15-minute bus ride away from the city center. When the weather warmed up, I would go early in the morning to watch surfers rip the waves, while I studied for my afternoon classes.

Playing ambassador

Another unexpected thrill for me was becoming an unofficial Philippine ambassador of goodwill.

My physical features, to begin with, made me quite a curiosity. Many people would walk up to me to ask me where I was from, trying to reconcile the nation with the "exotic" mix of mocha-colored skin and round eyes. When I replied, in perfect English, that I was from the Philippines, I'd get a wide variety of reactions, ranging from the educated to the ignorant. A German guy didn't know many Filipinos could speak English. An elderly Australian woman on the bus asked about Ferdinand Marcos. A Norwegian friend begged me to show him photos of all the great beaches in the Philippines he'd heard of, as long as there were coconut trees. A cute American girl asked if the Philippines was an island off Guatemala, until her Irish boyfriend slapped her on the back and told her to study the world map that night.

Ironic as it sounds, living in another country was what magnified my patriotism. I indulged my multicultural crew with true stories of adventures in my homeland. I talked about diving in Barracuda Lake in Coron, where you needed to rock climb a jagged stone wall before diving into the lake where at a certain depth, majestic cliffs greeted you with a whirl of transparent fish and a lone barracuda. I told of the Sagada caves, where the flowing waters inside created natural limestone formations resembling silk curtains and sleeping women. I made them starry-eyed describing Boracay sands as softer than powder, and the way the colors of the water changed from aquamarine to turquoise as you peered out into the horizon. Best of all, I had photos to prove that these magical places existed.

End chapter

Just as every chapter in life comes to an end, so had my semester of higher learning come to a close. Of course I was sad to leave such a beautiful city and even more beautiful souls, but I accepted that it was time to go home.

Yet when the NAIA terminal doors opened and I breathed in the pollution of the city, I felt all my senses were poisoned. That was when panic struck. I was thrust once again into the chaos of December traffic, bad news about bomb explosions, and the ugly vision of a man peeing against a wall. Wake up, I told myself, you're home.

The first weeks back in Manila were a nightmare. I couldn't help but compare everything to Sydney. As I strolled the pretty, newly built Greenbelt 3 back then, I was perplexed that everyone was looking at me in a weird way for wearing a tank top, shorts and slippers even if the sun was out and well, it was *hot!* Days later, my best gay friend tried to cheer me up by scoring free tickets and an exclusive interview with a certain DJ named Sasha, who had just flown in for a holiday set. After a mind-blowing 15 minutes with one of the best DJs in the world, I headed over to the party, only to get frustrated seeing people dressed to the nines and hardly dancing in spite of his mesmerizing mixes. More people were texting or standing in front of the DJ booth taking photos of Sasha with newfangled cell phones, instead of cutting loose with the music.

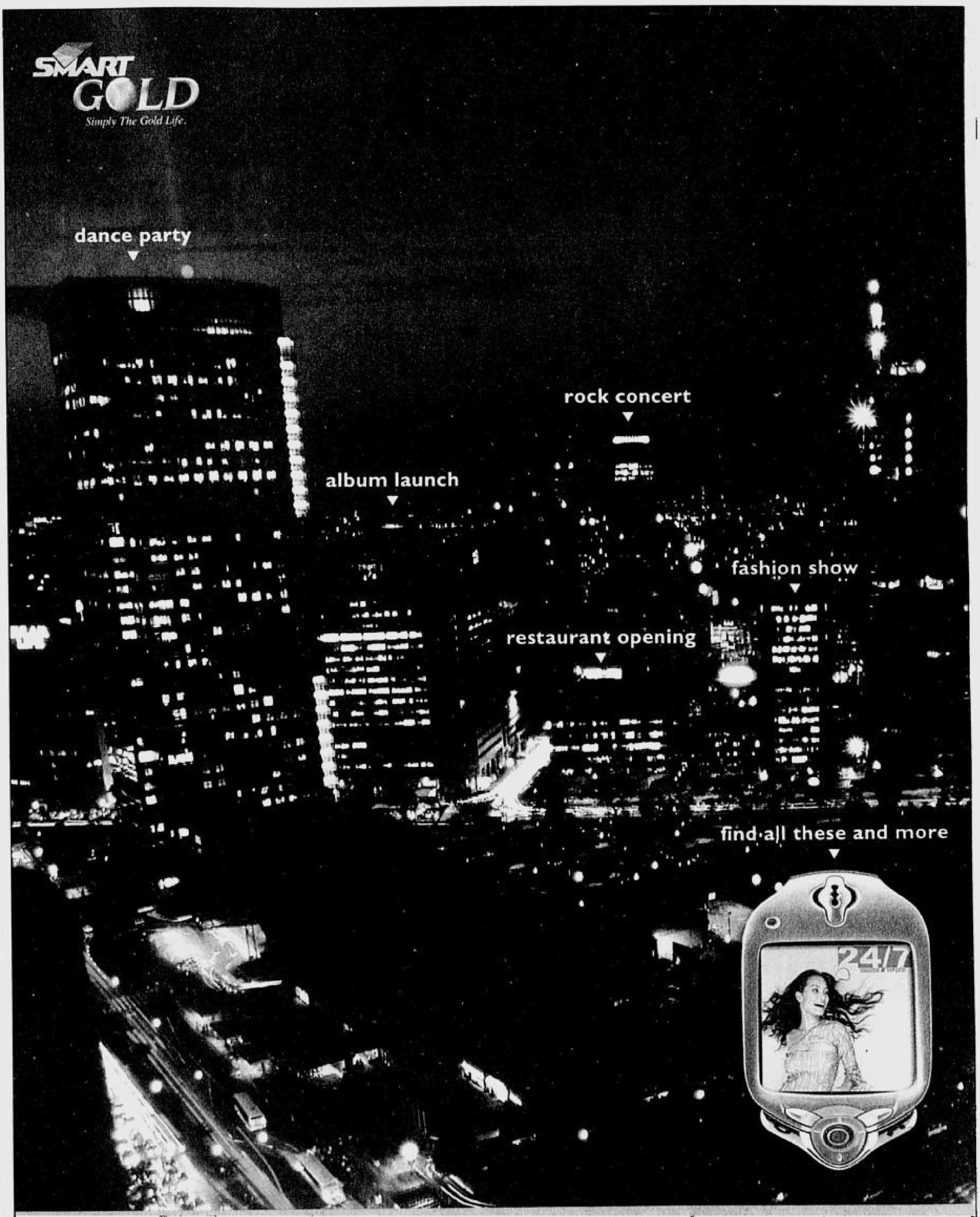
I wondered why more Pinoys wore the Stars and Stripes or the Union Jack instead of the Philippine emblem on their shirts. I recalled a beautiful day in Sydney, walking through a beachside installation art show. One of the exhibits was a clothesline made by a surfer who made board shorts out of the different world flags. Of all the flag-shorts my Swedish friend picked first, she marveled at a blue, red, white and yellow one. She said, "Wow! I wonder what flag this is? It has a sun and three stars!" I smiled and said, "The Philippines, baby!" Then I fell silent when she asked me why I didn't have it hanging on my wall.

Even watching TV commercials back in Manila was such a pain as I observed that skin-whitening ads had multiplied faster than water-doused Gremlins.

I became depressed, complained more than usual, and started mapping out new plans entitled, "Anywhere But Here." My constant bitching was a big reason that my four-year relationship with my boyfriend ended, for he told me that I had "left my heart in Australia". I think it was more of like my heart was divided. I felt alienated in a country that I had absolutely loved, which was the most tragic of all. I just didn't share the vibe. For if you loved something so much, you wouldn't molest it with piss-respect. It was the ultimate irony, the need to escape just to keep the

BETTER/ H2

> My decision to go with the flow and make every day an adventure has made the past year one of the most awesome experiences of my young life



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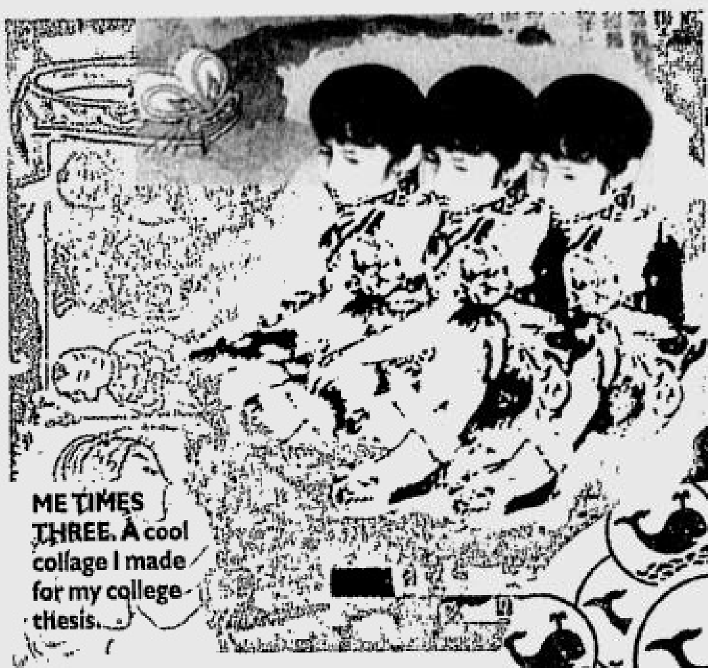
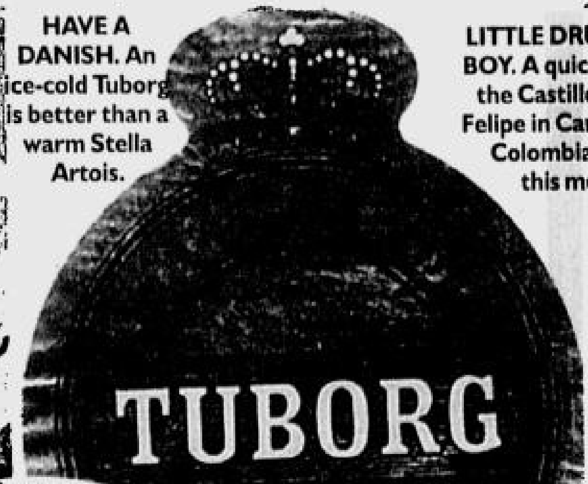


ME TIMES THREE. A cool collage I made for my college thesis.



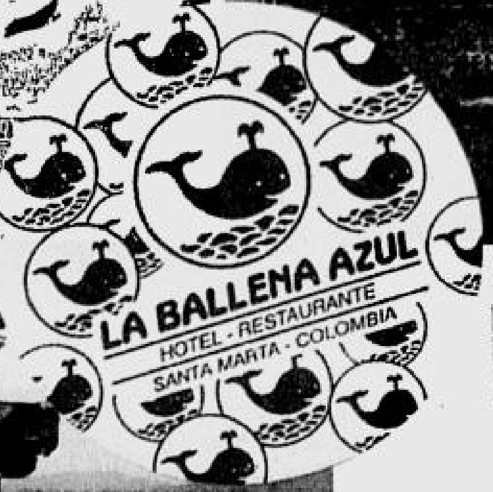
HAVE A DANISH. An ice-cold Tuborg is better than a warm Stella Artois.

LITTLE DRUMMER BOY. A quick trip to the Castillo de San Felipe in Cartagena, Colombia yielded this memento.

PIZZA FROM SCRATCH. Picked up this postcard somewhere in Edmonton.

NO SUBA / PELIGRO

JUMP AROUND. Or not. The sign, taken in Barranquilla translates to "Danger. Don't climb!"



COASTING ALONG. Never go scuba diving with a hangover.

WAY SOUTH OF THE BORDER. A DIY keepsake from Puebla, Mexico.

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

New Year's revolutions

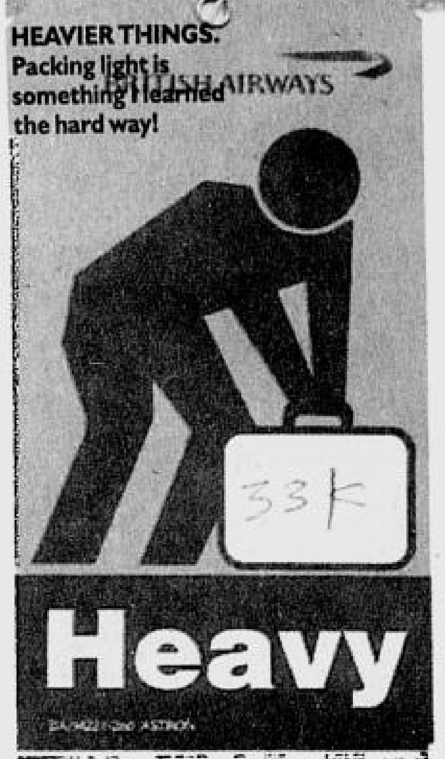
The future of the future will still contain the past

> Where time goes slow and time goes fast
> —"The Future of the Future (Stay Gold),"
> Deep Dish with Everything But The Girl

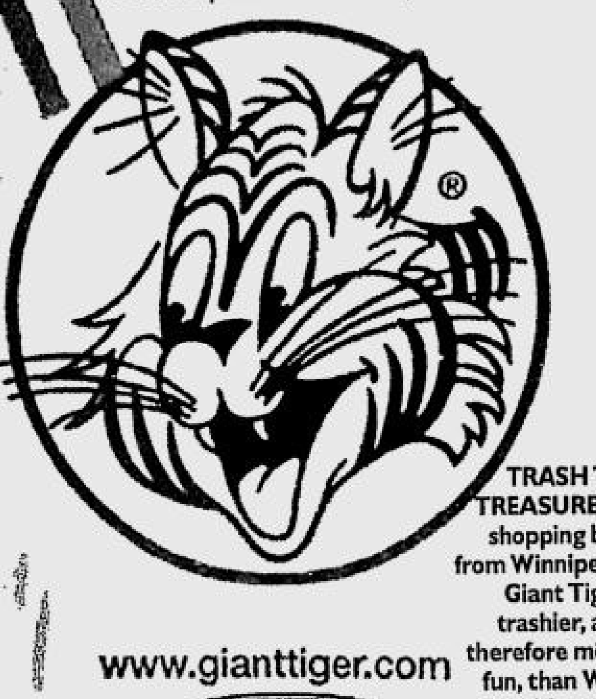
SINCE I hit the legal drinking age, I've celebrated the New Year like it was an extended remix of my own birthday—with bonus beats to boot. A minute into the first of 365 shrink-wrap-free days, I'd slam on the brakes and look back on the past year with equal parts of restlessness and optimism. A lot of work goes into making another twelve-month span better than the one that came before it, and that begins immediately after the ball drops.

12:01 am of '00, for example, I bobbed my head to DJ Cam, Basement Jaxx, and Paul Van Dyk and waved hello to Y2K by waiting for flying saucers to appear from out of nowhere. Didn't happen. Same time a year later, I followed Colombian tradition and ran around our block with an empty suitcase, which supposedly forecast a lot of traveling in the coming year. That came true like you wouldn't believe, so I give much respect to those Colombians and their crazy customs. 2K2 was the year I was obsessed with NitroTech so I watched my carbs and hit the sack quite early. Yawn. I more than made up for that during the first few moments of 2003 by partying hard, as Andrew WK eloquently put it. My friends and I counted down to the New Year of each major time zone in the North American continent and drank like drinking was going out of style. Despite its latent genius, the four-hour-long "Auld Lang Syne" resulted in catastrophes too typically embarrassing to admit. Now that 2004 looms in the horizon, I really have no clue how to trump that one.

Or maybe, I do. The thing I like most about the New Year is the same thing I love about the changing of the seasons: the shift from one way of being to another. To prepare myself for the 1st of January of yet another year, I recently cleaned up my room and found some star-quality bric-a-brac that started a storm in my head. The objects on this page may look like random garbage assembled with blindfolds on, but to me, they represent the need for new experiences versus the need for this season's latest must-have whatever. If the raw material for a creative economy is inspiration, then I think I'm off to a great—and authentic—start. Have an awesome 2004, everyone!



HEAVIER THINGS. Packing light is something I learned the hard way!



TRASH TO TREASURE. A shopping bag from Winnipeg's Giant Tiger, trashier, and therefore more fun, than Wal-Mart and Zeller's combined.

set back by 1½ ye
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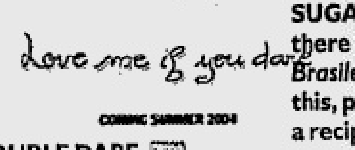
LOGO LOCO. A previous incarnation of the Super! logo circa September 2003.



DOUBLE DARE. This French movie, starring Guillaume Canet and Marion Cotillard, will be the "Amelie" of 2004.

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היתרון הוא
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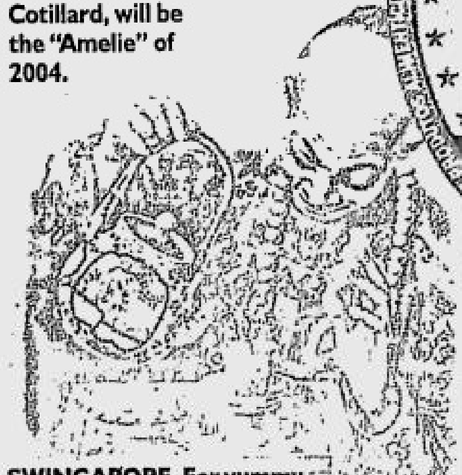
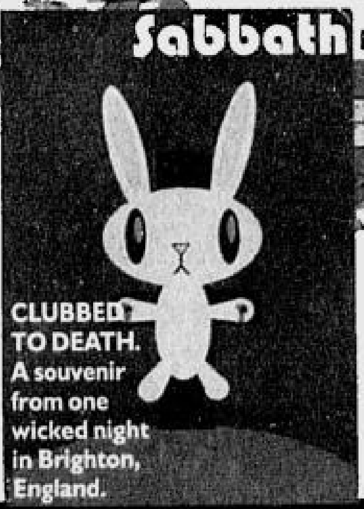
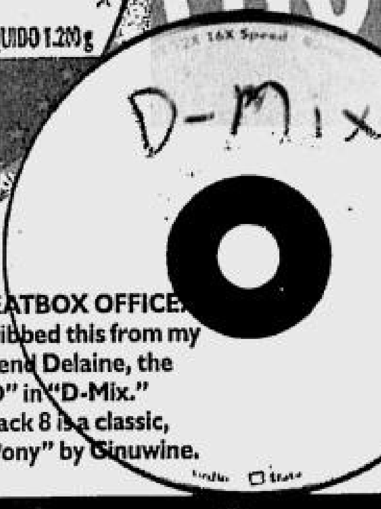
IRON, LION, ZION. Peeled this label off a mineral water bottle that kept me alive in Zion Square, Jerusalem.



SWINGAPORE. For yummy chiken rice, Boon Tong Kee is the place to be in Singapore.



CLUBBED TO DEATH. A souvenir from one wicked night in Brighton, England.



BEATBOX OFFICE. Cribbed this from my friend Delaine, the "D" in "D-Mix." Track 8 is a classic, "Pony" by Ginuwine.

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WHO LOVES YOU, BABY? God does, according to the pushy Mormons who lived beside Safeway.

STARDUST PART 2? Morjac's "Stars" is for dancing with tears in your eyes.

Better daze ahead

From page H1

magical Philippines alive in my mind.

The Shift

Because of the breakup, I took every opportunity to leave the city as much as I could and focus on new activities to keep me distracted. I continued surfing, which I had learned in Oz, and eventually hooked up with other young surfers who took me to different places around the Philippines with beautiful, virtually unknown surf breaks.

Because of long, and sometimes cumbersome road trips, I immersed myself in conversations with these twentysomethings who surprised me with a shared belief in the importance of seeing our country *first* as key to being a global citizen.

Since waves are unpredictable, we'd patiently wait in *kubos* or *carinderias* from La Union to Siargao, bond with other young locals and foreigners over San Miguel, Tanduay or Ginebra. It was amazing how such simple pleasures like good conversation, cheap food and the view of mountains embracing the Pacific Ocean were all I needed to feel at home again. I never forgot something one Manileño surfer said, "We have 7,100 freakin' islands. How many thousand more out-of-town plans do we have to make before we're too old?"

Slave to freedom

Apart from surfing, I discovered that there was a blossoming school in Manila for Capoeira, the Brazilian martial art that I've been wanting to take for so long. More than the cool moves and fantastic gymnastics, I was entranced with its philosophy of respect and camaraderie. I became close to our Brazilian Professor Batata, who left his homeland and family to spread Capoeira's beauty and beliefs in the Philippines. He imparted wisdom outside training through what I believe is the ultimate universal language, music. He'd quote Bob Marley: "Dance and keep your problems away!" I enjoyed his stories of Brazil, also a struggling country like ours, yet I observed that in spite of their country's many problems and hardships, Brazilians were so unbelievably patriotic, it was phenomenal. It was an attitude I admired and envied; I wished more Filipinos showed the same fervor.

Suns and starfish

My decision to go with the flow and make every day an adventure has made the past year one of the most awesome experiences of my young life. Apart from fantastic sunrises and legions of stars, my favorite experiences were simply meeting and making new friends my age, Pinoys and expats of my generation right here in my homeland. That was what killed my cynicism: realizing there is truth in the cliché that the future lies in the youth. My ultimate thrills this year, believe it or not, were simply great conversations with young people who truly believe there's something we can do about the general attitude here, by simply having faith that we can make a difference. Just last night, I met a young musician from Velcro who said, "People should just shut up complaining about this country and start doing something about it."

My own year's story reminds me of the parable of the thousands of starfish washed up on the shore. There was a single person on the beach making the effort of picking up each one and throwing it back to the sea to keep the starfish alive. When someone asked him how he could possibly make a difference with all the thousands embanked on the sand, the Samaritan beach bum picked up another one, hurled it back into the water and said, "It sure made a difference to *that* one."

And that, kindred youngblood, is something I've been cheering for. It's good to be home.

(E-mail the author at: inca_orange@yahoo.com)

SUPERFRIENDS

Global Village People

Text and Photos by Tals Diaz

WELCOME, welcome to a little global village right here in our very own Pacific archipelago! Traipsing out and around town, we met some beautiful foreigners with even more beautiful things to say about the Philippines and Filipinos. Hey, maybe you can check out some of their favorite destinations in our own country. Wanna be a Superfriend? E-mail us at super@inquirer.com.ph

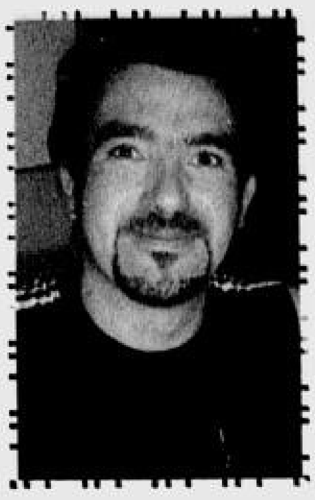
I'm Andre Felipe de Moraes.
I am from Brazil.
I'm here in the Philippines as a Capoeira (Brazilian martial art) teacher for Escola Brasileira de Capoeira (EBC) Philippines.
We say "Feliz Ano Novo!" for "Happy New Year!"
My favorite Tagalog word is "*maganda!*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Boracay!
I think the weather of a country tells a lot about its people. Here in the Philippines, it's very warm, like the Filipino people.
E-mail me at:
capoeiraandre@hotmail.com

I'm Francesco Fumarola, from Italy.
I'm here on vacation.
My favorite Tagalog phrase is "*Ang ganda mo!*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is the CCP!
I think Filipinas are very, very beautiful.
E-mail me at:
fumarola@msn.com

Hi, I'm Isabella Fumarola, from Italy.
I'm here traveling around the Philippines.
My favorite Tagalog word is "*banyo.*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Hidden Valley.
I think Filipinos are very kind.
E-mail me at: isa@msn.com

Hi, I'm Petrana Colesanti, from Italy.
We say "Buon Anno" for "Happy New Year!"
I'm here on vacation with my friends, traveling around the Philippines.
My favorite Tagalog word is "*pare!*"
My favorite places in the Philippines are El Nido in Palawan, and Boracay.
I think Filipinos are very friendly!
E-mail me at:
syllebe@yahoo.it

I'm Thomas Hickmann from Germany.
I'm here on vacation.
We say "Frobes Neves Johr" for "Happy New Year!"
My favorite Tagalog phrase is, "*Kamusta ka?*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Sagada. I love hiking in Sagada.
One thing I have to say about Filipinos is that they are very easy-going. They really follow Filipino time.



I'm Xabier Garay, from Spain.
In my language, Basque, we say "Urte Berri On!" for "Happy New Year!"
My favorite Tagalog words are "*Puwede!*" "*Di ba?*" and "*trankaso.*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Tawi-Tawi!
I think Filipinos are very welcoming, always smiling and beautiful people.
E-mail me at:
xabiergaray@yahoo.es

Hi, I'm Fernando Linberger.
I'm from the South of Brazil.
We say "Feliz Ano Novo" for "Happy New Year" in Portuguese.
My favorite Tagalog word is "*makulit!*" That is my nickname! Also, "*Grabe! Grabe mo!*"
I think Filipinos are very nice!
E-mail me at:
ferlinb@hotmail.com

I'm Bernd Rotermann. I am from Germany.
My favorite Tagalog word is "*salamat.*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Taal Lake in Tagaytay.
I think Filipinos are very friendly!

I'm Hugo Stewart, from Mexico
We say "Feliz año nuevo!" for "Happy New Year!"
My favorite Tagalog word is "*Salamat.*"
My favorite place in the Philippines is Coron, Palawan. The limestone formation, vegetation and snorkeling was great!
I think Filipinos are fun people.
E-mail me at: vitola@hotmail.com

Hi, I'm Linda de Ferrari. I'm from Italy.
My favorite place in the Philippines is Boracay.
I think Filipinos are very good to guests, very hospitable.
E-mail me at:
lindaeif@ceo.it

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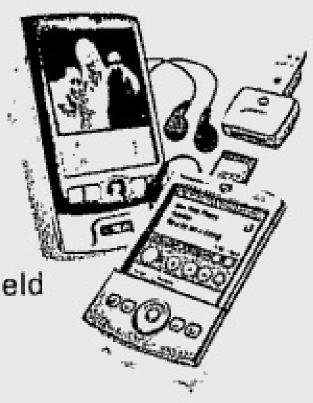

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Short Story: Felice, Noel and the Christmas Disaster Page 4
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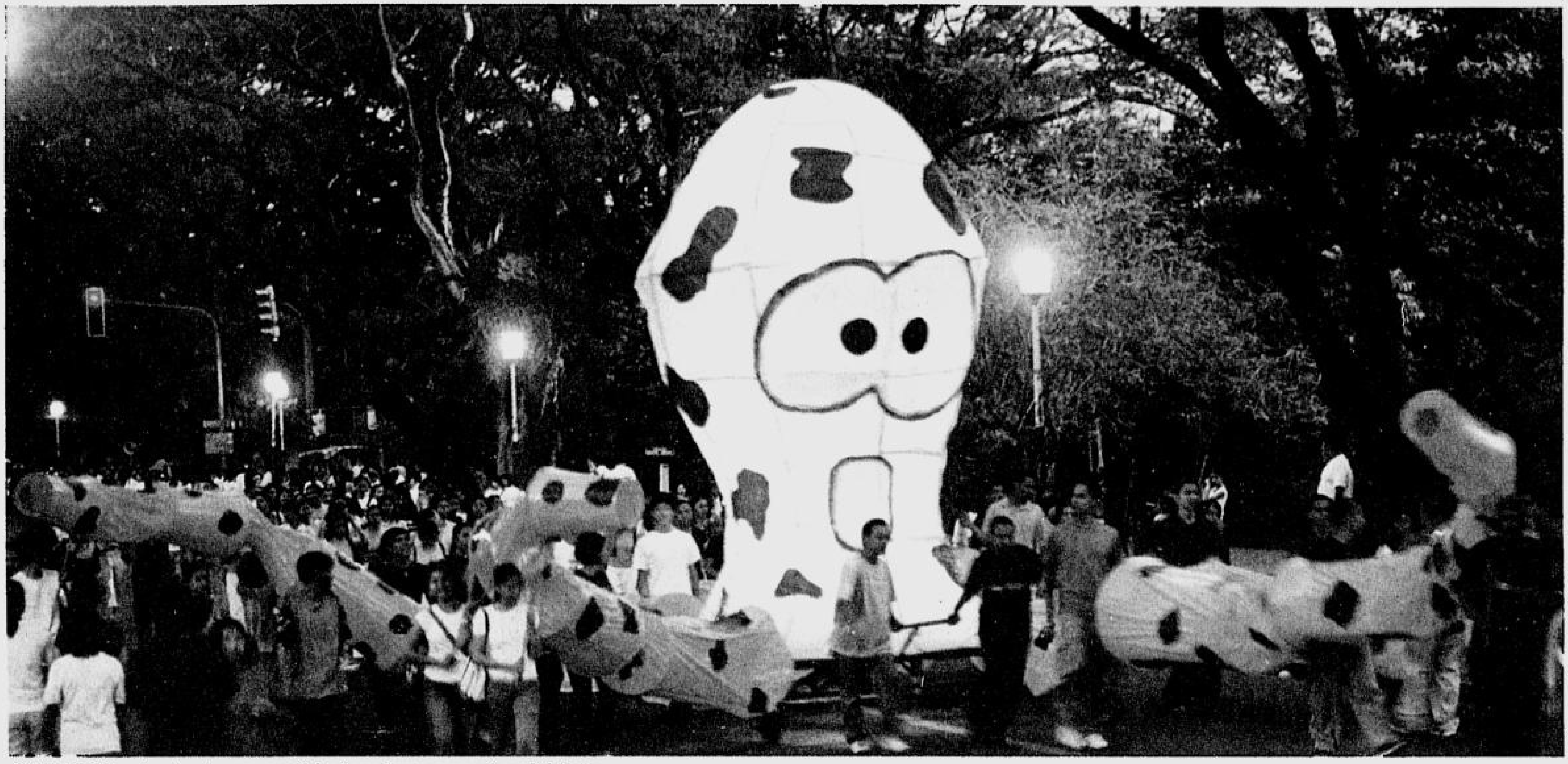


AAAH! This giant octopus can't believe humans eat squid balls.

ROMY HOMILLADA

GIANT SEA CREATURES Wow Crowds in UP Lantern Parade

By Eline Santos

A PINK octopus, green turtles, jellyfish, clownfish and a host of other sea creatures joined other big, strange and wonderful things in the annual University of the Philippines Lantern Parade in Quezon City.

Kids mingled with their college *kuyas* and *ates* for this colorful Christmas festival.

"I like the dancing, the costumes, the music," said Anna Angelica Angala, a second-grader from UP Integrated School who was watching the parade. Anna said she liked the College of Education lantern which was composed of puzzle pieces.

Angelo Castillo, a Kinder 2 student at the Rural Improvement Laboratory in Quezon City, said he liked the eagle and the lion lanterns.

"They're my favorite animals," Angelo said.

The rather large sea creatures danced to the tune of "Under the Sea." These were made by the Asian Institute of Tourism.

"I liked the big *parol*," said Jezreel Tintero, a fourth-grader at the Marikina Disciples Church Christian School. Jezreel, who always watches the lantern parade, said he liked the star lantern because it was symbolic of Christmas.

Rolf Tapang, a fourth-grader from New Era University, Quezon City is a member of Iglesia ni Kristo. Their family doesn't celebrate Christmas.

Still, Rolf enjoyed the Karnabal presentation from Lantern Parade Hall of Famer, the College of Fine Arts.

"I liked everything," Rolf said.

The fine arts group presented a whole Carnival with carnival characters, games, streamers, animals and rides.

There were midgets, a giant puppeteer, and an ice cream cart with a nose-glowing clown. A beto-beto game float spouted fireworks. Bumper car lanterns lit their antennas and ran around the area. There was a li-

Giant/ p. 7

Kids Win **Big** for Helping Others

By Eline Santos

SANTA Claus' "Nice Kid Alert" must have gone off like crazy when 10-year-old Celina Gabriel Acle treated 30 kids from poor families to a piping hot breakfast of *arroz caldo*.

It probably also clanged when 12-year-old Joseph Galvez treated their village's three maintenance men and their families to a night out at Star City.

Well, these kids are not only on Santa's good kid list. They are also on Nickelodeon's list of kids who are a "Big Help" to their communities.

Celina, Joseph, Jillian Grace Dee, Jessica Karen Millonada and Julia Anne Sombilon are winners of "The Big Help" contest.

CELINA hands out bowls of arroz caldo to kids in their Mandaluyong neighborhood.

Nickelodeon invited Filipino kids to send them an idea on how they plan to help other people. The best five ideas or pledges were then selected, and the winners were awarded a Toy Run. They were all given four minutes to gather as many toys as they could in SM Megamall's Toy Kingdom.

Kids Win/ p. 7

Family Day Lessons

Woodrose kids learn good sportsmanship on Family Day

GOOD sportsmanship filled the air during the Family Fun Day at PAREF Woodrose School in Muntinlupa.

Even after a month-long competition of games, fifth-grader Christine Gamboa of the Red Team Circus said she thought the Green Voyagers was the best team.

"I like their dance. They have their dance with the sticks. It's so original," said Christine.

Also, after the exciting cheer dance competition, one girl from the Gold El Dorados stepped up on stage to shout, "Red team, I really think you're the best!"

Everything was done in the spirit of fun and camaraderie.

"I'm going to be happy for the one who wins," said Kathleen Francisco, a fifth-grader El Dorado member.

El Dorado member Aimee Lee, a fourth-grader, said that it's just normal because nobody can always win.

Win or lose, cheering is a chance to shout herself hoarse and no one would mind, according to Margaux Antonio, a fifth-grader Blue Titan.

AT their glittery best, the Gold El Dorados bend over backwards to try for the cheerleading trophy.

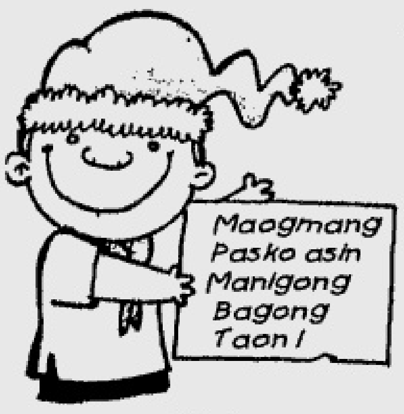
BETOY JOHNSON

"You have lots of energy. Everything goes out. You get to be yourself," Margaux said.

Go, go, go Girls!

The Red Team Circus, Blue Titans, Green Voyagers, and Gold El Dorados were each composed of about 260 Woodrose girls from Grade 1 up to high school. All the teams gave enthusiastic, energetic performances.

Family/ p. 7


Maogmang Pasko asin Manigong Bagong Taon!

Bikol

PINOY SPEAK

WANT to know other ways to say Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year? See page 7.

Junior INQUIRER Special

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Letters to the editor may be sent to our e-mail address <ji@inquirer.com.ph>. Our office is at the Philippine Daily Inquirer Building, Chino Roces Ave. (formerly Pasong Tamo) corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City, Philippines, with telephone number 897-8808 local 340. Snail mail: P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office, 1263 Makati City, Philippines. E-mail: ji@inquirer.com.ph

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Child-Friendly Awardee
UNICEF-PPI CHILD-FRIENDLY NEWSPAPER AND JOURNALIST AWARDS

2003 Best Children's Newspaper Awardee

A Different Gift

IT'S time for New Year's resolutions again. What's on your list?

Study harder? Better grades? Make up with the best friend you fought with?

Those are really good resolutions. But why not include one resolution for mom and dad?

Sometimes, parents make mistakes. And sometimes they say things to kids without meaning to.

Maybe this year, you can help mom and dad out by making sure you tell them how you feel—especially when you feel bad about something they said.

Like us, parents also have a difficult time saying "I'm sorry." They may feel as awkward as we do when we need to say sorry to a good friend.

So write that down in your list and be the best kid a parent could ever ask for!

WE need writers

IF YOU'RE 10-12 years old and can write very good essays, news and feature stories, we would like to hear from you! Write a 200-300 word essay about your most memorable experience in school and send it to the editor at nvizcarra@inquirer.com.ph with your contact details.

JOURNAL PAGES

Richard's Teenage Life

By Richard Teotico
Grade 7, La Salle Greenhills
Mandaluyong City

THERE'S A 13-YEAR-OLD boy who lives in a compound in San Juan and loves to play basketball everyday.

"I really love playing basketball," he says.

This dude collects Marvel toys. In his free time, he never fails to check his page in friendster.com.

When there is a chance, he hits the dance floor. He performs amazing dance numbers in some of his relatives' birthday parties. He can even beat Justin Timberlake (others say). "Justin is my idol," he says.

He attends his club meeting every Friday. This is the Junior Actors Guild or JAG.

He never fails to hang out with his three fave cousins.

"They are Daryl, Dominick and Pio."

He also loves meeting girls.

The best part of all is when he is with his family. "Being with my family makes me the happiest person in the world."

This person is me. I am Richard Benedict Dee Teotico. I am a teenager.

I Have a Dream

By Madelaine So
Jefferson Middle School
Oceanside City, California USA

I HAVE a dream. I have always dreamed of becoming a teacher someday. I will be patient and would be very clear in my lessons. I will love my students as if they are my own. I will be a friend to them.

I dream of seeing my students learn and be successful later on in their chosen career. They will be the future teachers, doctors or scientist.

When I am old I would be so happy to know that I have been a part of their success in life.

I dream that one day I will be able to have a reunion with my relatives in the Philippines.

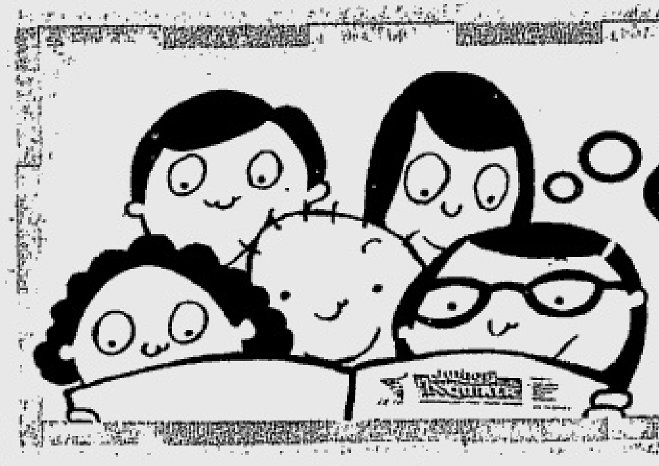
I was born in Dubai, United Arab Emirates as both of my parents worked there for 16 years. I met some of my relatives in the Philippines only once. This was when we went there for a vacation six years ago.

Most of the time, I only hear stories from my parents about my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. I see their photographs during family occasions and I dream of being there with them.

For now, I exchange e-mails with some of my cousins who have computers.

I also dream that one day the world will be living in peace and harmony. No matter what their beliefs or religion is, no matter what their color is, no matter if they are rich or poor. We are all human beings and we should love each other and not compete against each other. I dream that someday, all the countries in the world will be joining together, sharing and helping each other.

Sound Familiar ?
Write down your thoughts now and send them to JI. Who knows, you might just get published!



Straight from JI Readers

You can reach us via e-mail! Our address is ji@inquirer.com.ph Don't forget to include your complete name, age, snail mail address and phone number. Hope to hear from you soon!

Wrong Translation

TO whom it may concern:

On the Nov. 29 issue, JI presented eight ways of saying "Mabuhay ang Katipunan" on its frontpage with illustrations. It translated "Mabuhay ang Katipunan" in Cebuano as "Mabuhay ug Katipunan" which is very wrong.

"Ug" in Cebuano means "and" so when you say "Mabuhay ug Katipunan," you are simply saying "Mabuhay at Katipunan" which is entirely different. The correct translation would be "Mabuhi ang Katipunan" which is right and formal. The less formal translation would be "Mabuhay ang Katipunan" which is the same as in Tagalog.—**LOUIE LOGICO**, 1307 Pob., Maco, Davao 8114

DEAR Louie,

Thanks for pointing out the error. Dr. Nita Buenaobra of the Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino claims that "ug" was a typographical error on their part.

She does maintain that "mabuhay" is the better term, and that "mabuhi" connotes a different meaning (i.e. rising from the dead).—Eline Santos

Understanding Those Who Are Not Well

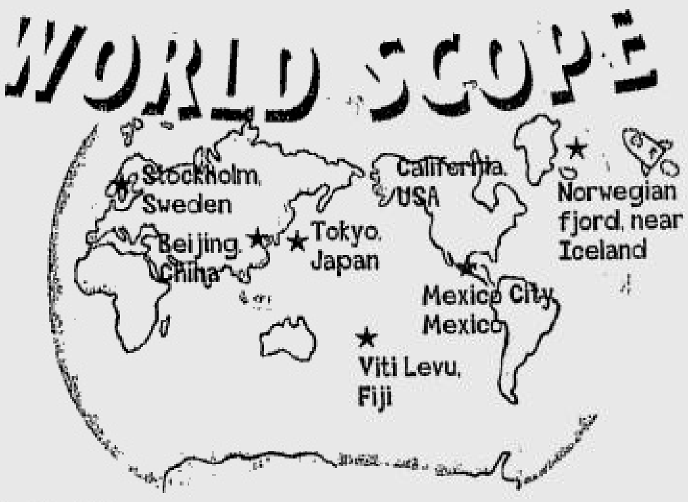
THE VOICE is used in communication and it is very important. Many have voices that are heard but some are not.

That's very odd! Why are they not heard? It's because they cannot speak or they have cerebral palsy.

People who have this illness are sometimes treated wrongly and that is very bad.

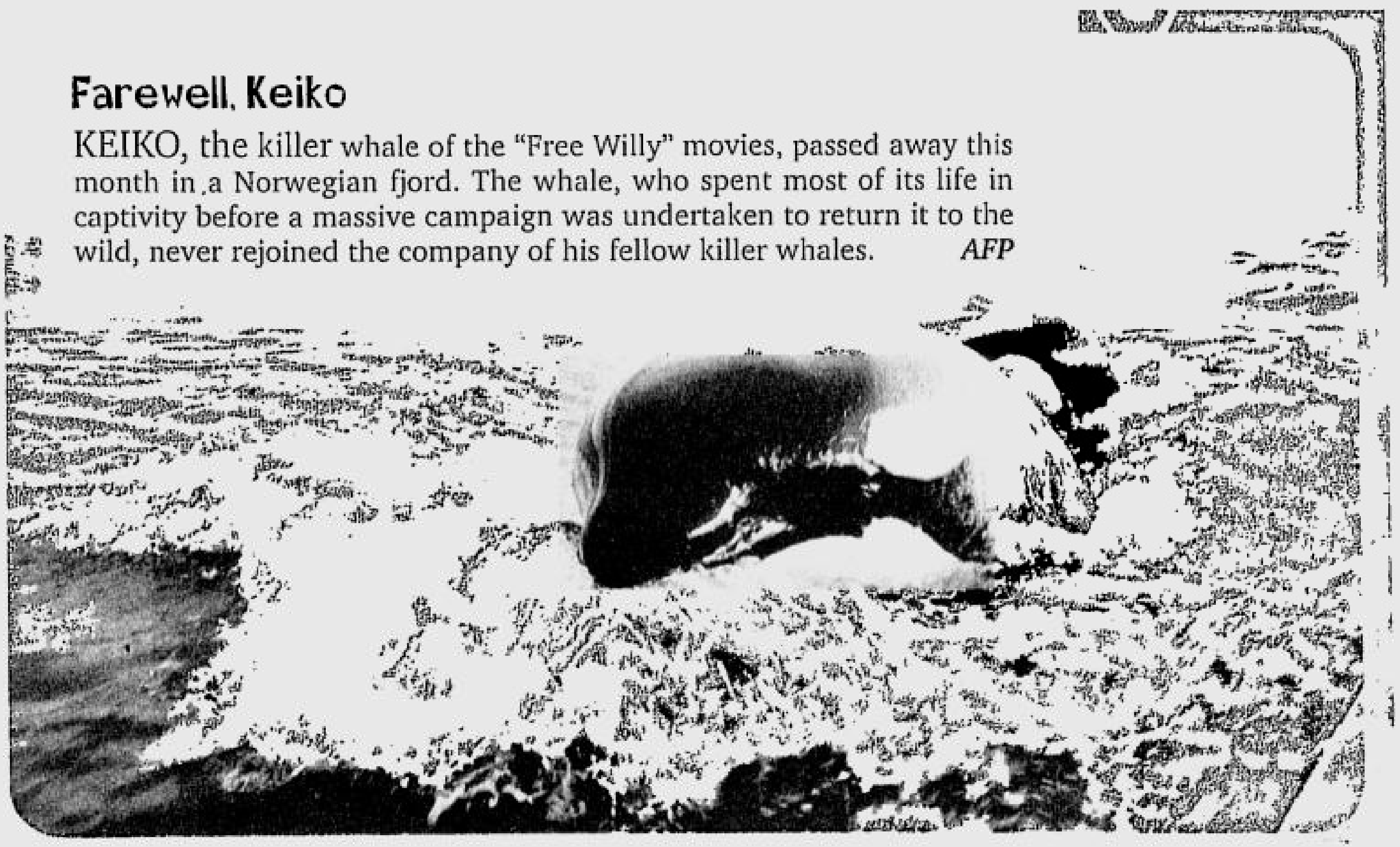
Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel? Perhaps they are full of anger or... full of questions that are not yet answered or full of sorrow. So next time, treat everyone nicely, no matter who they are. Give them respect because they are also like us, too. We belong to one God, our Father.—**BIANCA CLAVERIA**, Grade 6-Puti, Miriam Grade School, Quezon City

WORLD SCOPE


Stockholm, Sweden
Beijing, China
Tokyo, Japan
California, USA
Norwegian fjord, near Iceland
Mexico City, Mexico
Viti Levu, Fiji

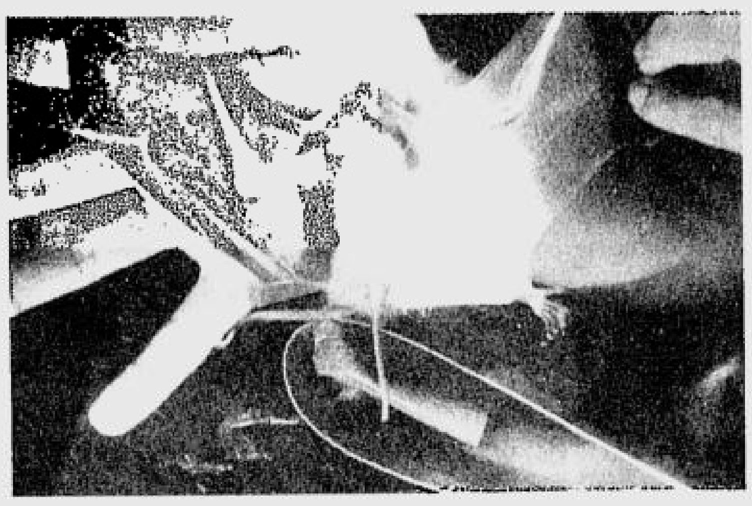
Farewell, Keiko

KEIKO, the killer whale of the "Free Willy" movies, passed away this month in a Norwegian fjord. The whale, who spent most of its life in captivity before a massive campaign was undertaken to return it to the wild, never rejoined the company of his fellow killer whales. *AFP*



Safe Now

A RARE blossom bat (bats with a tail) is examined by a wildlife biologist in the forest area of Sovi basin in the island of Viti Levu. The Sovi basin area is to become the site of a multi-million dollar, internationally funded conservation project, that will protect 32 bird species, including 19 of 21 endemic species. *AFP*

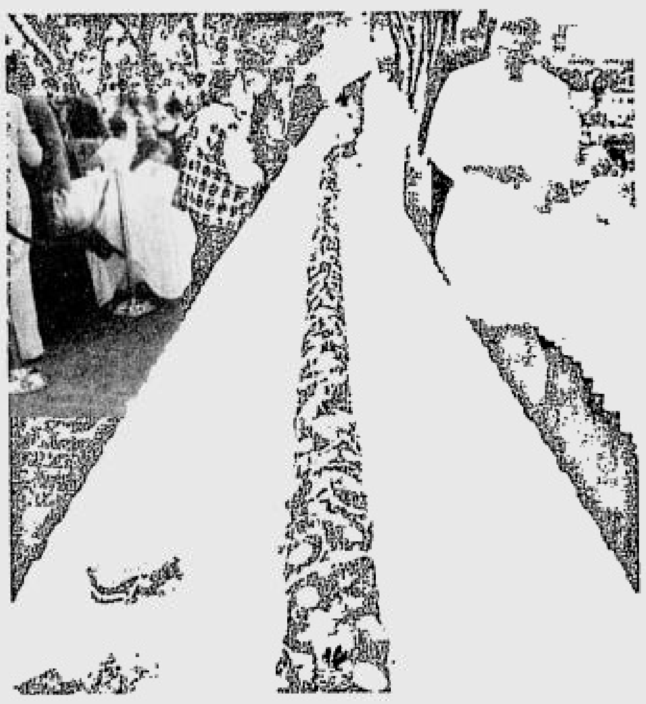


Roaring Monkey

LUPE, a male black howler monkey born on July 19 receives his first medical check up at the San Francisco Zoo. Lupe, the first black howler monkey born at the Zoo in five years, will cling to his mother until he's weaned at about 10 months of age. Black howler monkeys are native to eastern Bolivia, northeast Argentina, Paraguay and southern Brazil. Howlers are the only South American mammal that howls, a sound which has been described as deep resonating growls comparable to the roar of lions. *AP*

This Year's Lucia

STOCKHOLM'S Lucia 2003, Therese Andersson, 18, and her maids sing Santa Lucia and Christmas songs at the NK department store in Stockholm for a crowd of people busy with their Christmas shopping. Lucia is traditionally celebrated in Sweden on Dec. 13, a day when Lucia and her maids appear almost everywhere—from schools to workplaces where they spread a happy atmosphere with songs, coffee and special safran bread. Lucia was a saint that lived in Syracuse, Sicily and died a martyr's death in the year 304. Therese and two other girls traveled to Syracuse on Dec. 14 to take part in the great procession there. *AFP*

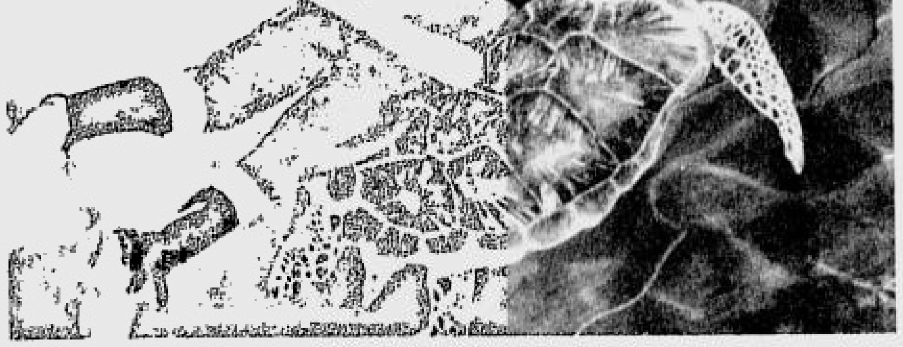


For Chocolate Lovers Only

THE world's longest chocolate yulelog, 27.90-meter long, is being served in Mexico City. The cake was registered in the Guinness Book of Records. *AFP*

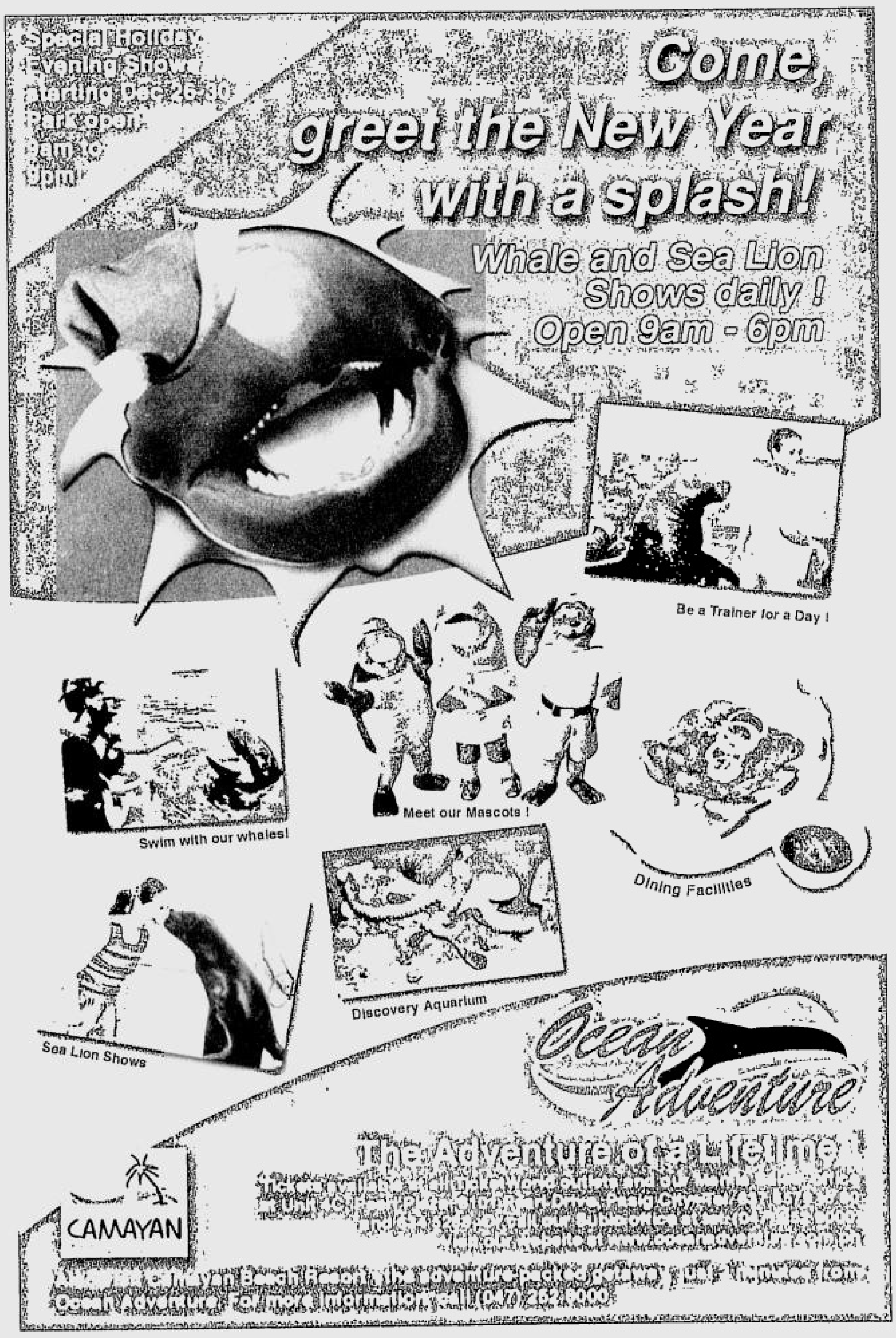
Q4!

JAPAN'S electronics giant Sony's humanoid robot "Qrio," 58-cm tall and weighing 7 kg, show their dancing performance at a press preview of "Sony Explora Science" in Tokyo. *AFP*



Ni hao, Christmas!

A DIVER dressed as Santa Claus feeds a sea turtle at an aquarium in Beijing. Christmas is becoming increasingly popular in China as Chinese are adopting more Western ideas and festivals. *Reuters*


Special Holiday Evening Shows starting Dec 26-30
Park open 9am to 9pm
Come, greet the New Year with a splash!
Whale and Sea Lion Shows daily !
Open 9am - 6pm
Be a Trainer for a Day !
Swim with our whales!
Meet our Mascots !
Dining Facilities
Sea Lion Shows
Discovery Aquarium
Ocean Adventure
The Adventure of a Lifetime !
CAMAYAN

Felice, Noel, and the Christmas Da

Story by Didith Tan Rodrigo
Illustrations by Jason Moss

OF all the holidays in the whole year, Felice and Noel loved Christmas the most. Felice loved singing Christmas carols. Noel loved watching the Christmas cartoon specials. Felice loved helping Mom set up the Belen. Noel loved helping Dad decorate the Christmas tree. Felice loved the cool walks to the early morning masses. Noel loved munching on *puto bumbong* and *bibingka* on the way home. And the very best part? On Christmas day itself, they had Christmas lunch at Lola Ida's.

As far as Felice and Noel were concerned, Lola Ida was the best cook in the world. The delicious food she stewed, stirred, baked, and fried made Christmas at her house the tastiest in the whole world!

Felice and Noel knew it took Lola Ida days to prepare Christmas lunch. When she was younger, she used to do everything by herself. As she got older, though, her best friend and neighbor, Lola Viring, came over to cook with her. Lola Ida appreciated the company and the help. In exchange, Lola Viring got to take home Tupperwares filled with Christmas delights.

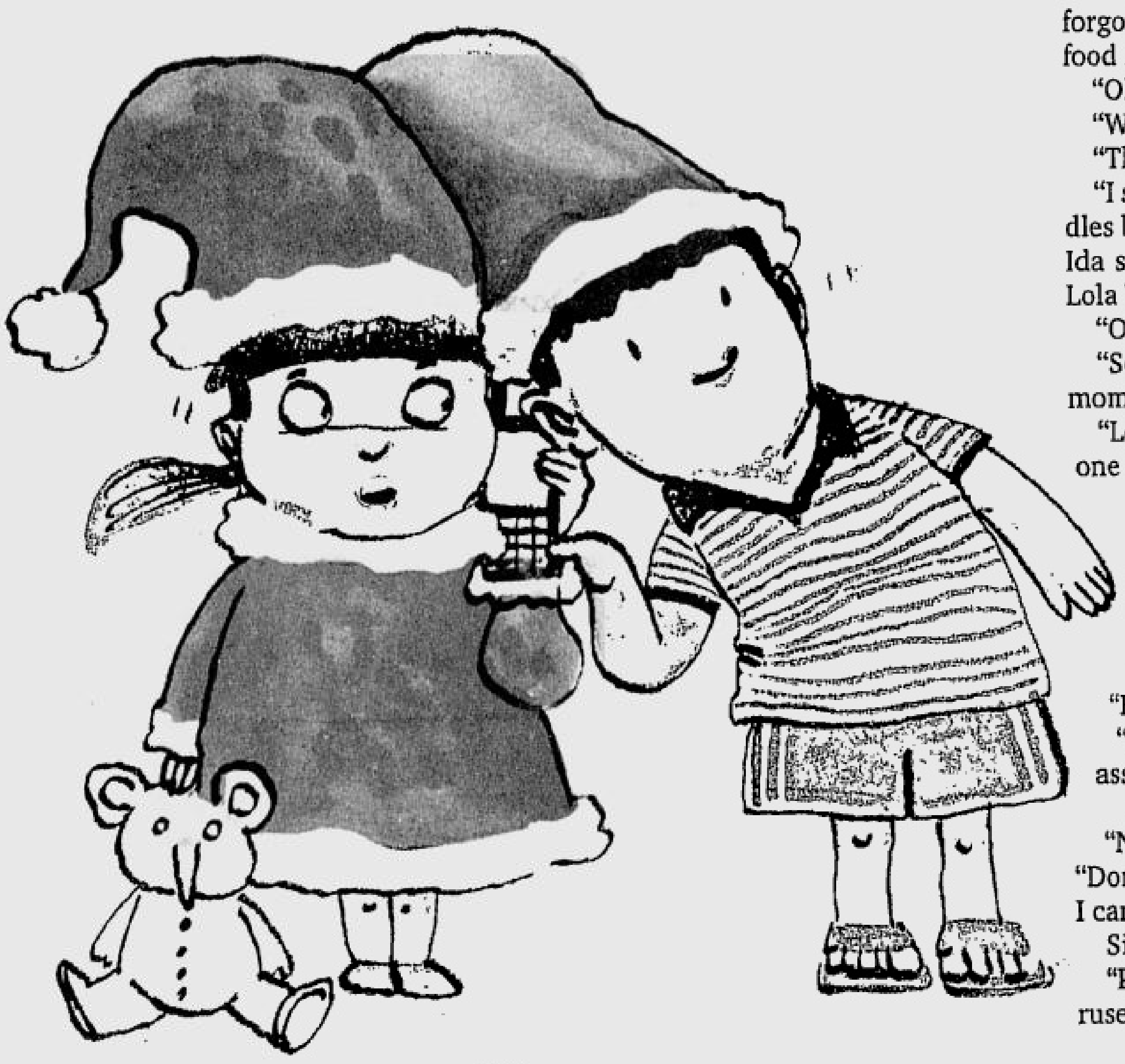
One week before Christmas, Lola Ida and Lola Viring slow-cooked Tito Sam and Tita Mely's favorite: pot roast with chestnuts and prunes. Four days before Christmas, they stuffed shrimps with mushrooms and ground pork and froze them for Tita Arlene and Tito Paul. The two days before Christmas, they simmered chicken, beef, pork, and sausage for Mommy and Daddy's *cocido*. They put the cooked meats and their soup in the fridge and scraped off the lard when it was cool. The day before Christmas, they sautéed the pork, chicken, and vegetable sauce for the fried noodles that all the grandchildren loved. By Christmas day, Lola Ida's refrigerator and freezer were full of the best goodies, just waiting to be reheated.

On Dec. 24, Felice and Noel were making their own preparations for Christmas. Mommy and Daddy had bought a cellular phone for Lola Ida, and Felice and Noel were in charge of programming it. Noel programmed the speed dial feature. Felice made a tiny index with the speed dial codes and inserted it into the phone's carrying case.

#1 Mommy and Daddy - home
#2 Mommy - cel
#3 Daddy - cel
#4 Tito Sam and Tita Mely - home
#5 Tito Sam - cel
#6 Tita Mely - cel
#7 Tita Arlene and Tito Paul - home
#8 Tita Arlene - cel
#9 Tito Paul - cel

Lola Ida would love this, they were sure!

> *"As far as Felice and Noel were concerned, Lola Ida was the best cook in the world."*



Just then the telephone rang. Felice answered, "Hello?"

"Hello, Felice? This is Lola Ida."

"Oh, hi, Lola!" greeted Felice.

"It's Lola Ida?" Noel asked. "I want to listen, too!" He stuck his head beside Felice's and said, "Hi, Lola!"

"Hi, Noel," Lola Ida said. "Can you two please tell your mommy that I have to cancel Christmas lunch?"

Noel could not believe his ears. "Cancel Christmas lunch?"

"How come?" Felice cried.

"The food is locked up in Lola Viring's house. I had to put it in her refrigerator. Then, today, Lola Viring had to leave for the province and she won't be back until the 27th. She locked up her house and forgot to give me the key. We have no food for lunch tomorrow."

"Oh, no, that's terrible!" Felice said.

"What a disaster!" Noel agreed.

"There's nothing left?" Felice asked.

"I still have the sauce for the fried noodles because I just made that today," Lola Ida said sadly. "But everything else is in Lola Viring's house."

"Oh ..." the two children sighed.

"So," Lola Ida continued, "Just tell your mommy we'll just call off lunch, OK?"

"Lola," Noel said. "Have you told anyone else yet?"

"No, I'm about to call your other titos and titas."

"Don't cancel yet, Lola," Noel pleaded. "We'll fix this."

Felice looked at her brother wide-eyed. Noel winked.

"How?" Lola Ida asked.

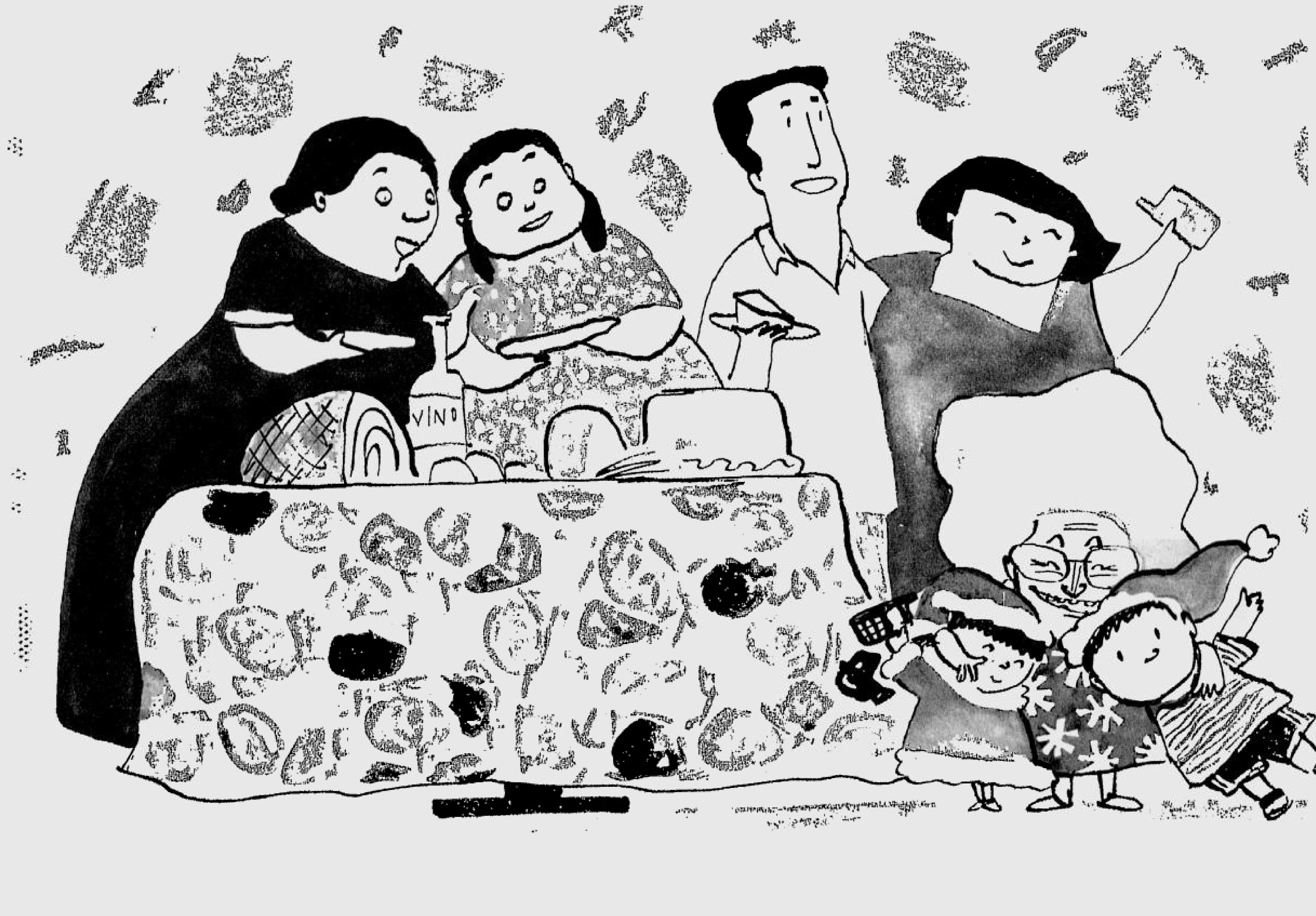
"We'll take care of it, promise," Noel assured her. "Don't worry."

"Uh, maybe I'll just ..." Lola began.

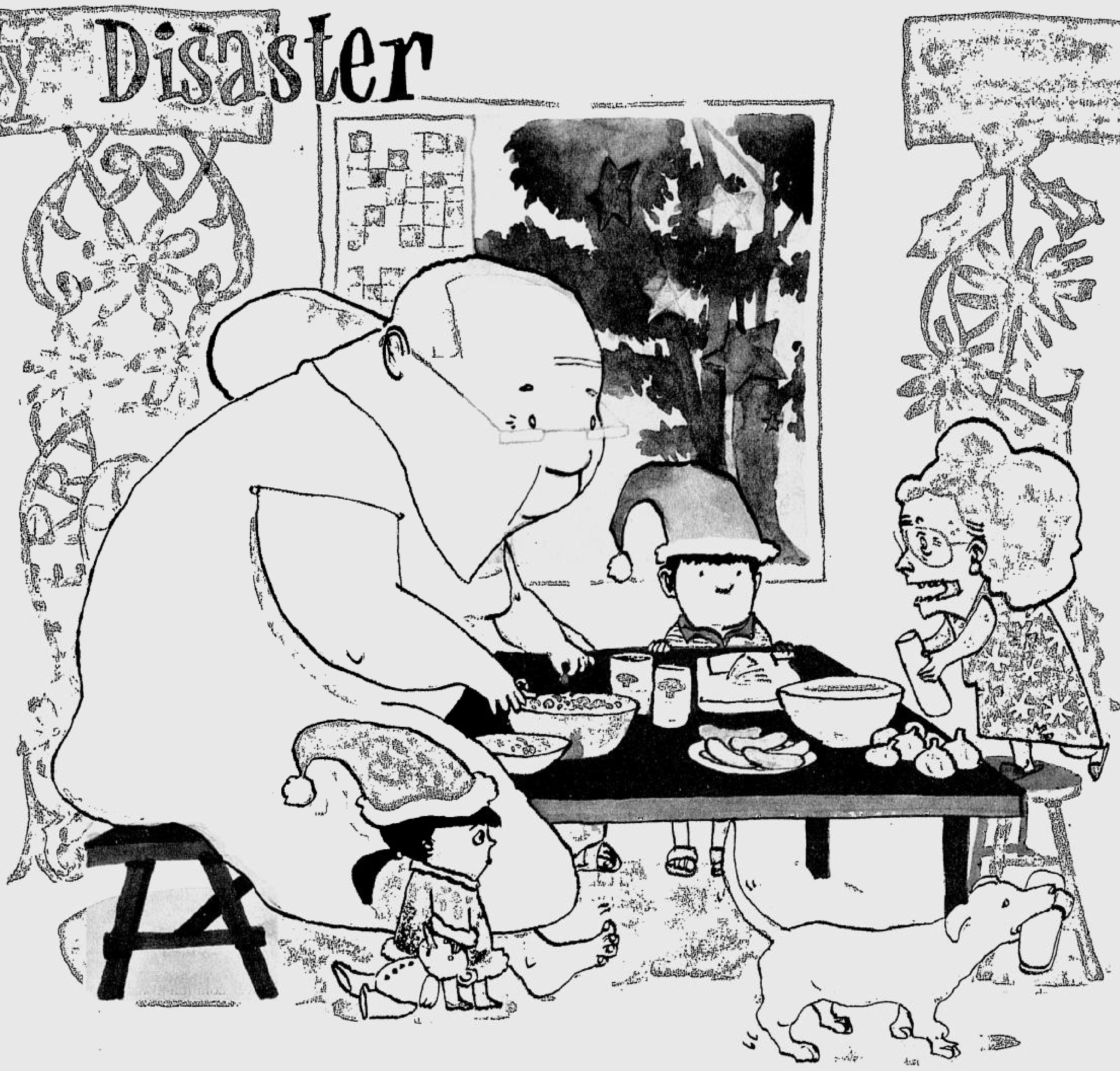
"No, no, no, Lola," Felice interrupted. "Don't cancel Christmas lunch. Noel and I can fix this, really."

Silence.

"Pleeeeease!" the two children chorused.



Disaster



"OK, OK," Lola managed to chuckle. "I will trust you to fix this. Bye."

When they put down the phone, Felice asked Noel, "How are we going to fix this?"

Noel replied, "Let's ask everyone to bring food!"

Felice clapped her hands, "That's right! Should I start calling?"

"No need!" Noel said, holding up Lola Ida's new cell phone. "Let's just send them text!"

Noel typed, "DIS IS LOLA IDA'S NEW FONE. FUD FOR XMAS IS LOKD IN LOLA VIRING'S HSE. BRNG FUD FOR TOM - NOEL N FELICE" and sent it to all the Titos and Titas.

Soon, Lola Ida's new phone started beeping:

From Tita Mely:

K. WIL BRNG ENSMDA N HAM

From Tita Arlene:

JST RCVD A RELLENO N CHSE. WILL BRNG THM TOM

Even Mommy, who was just in the other room, texted back, "WE CN BRNG A FRUIT CAKE N WINE."

The next day, Felice, Noel, Mommy and Daddy and the relatives arrived at Lola Ida's. The house was filled with Christmas hugs and kisses, exchanges of gifts, and of course, all the delicious Christmas food that everyone promised. And although they didn't get to gobble up their favorites, Christmas day was as special as it had always been.

Towards the end of the party, Lola Ida gave Felice and Noel an extra big hug.

"This was wonderful, you two!" Lola Ida laughed, "Thank you!"

"Merry Christmas, Lola," the two replied.

Didith is a computer science teacher at the Ateneo de Manila University. She is also the author of "Tamales Day!" and "Inside Manila with Kids." She dedicates this story to her Ninang Choleng.

Jason is a painter, illustrator and editorial cartoonist. He is a member of Ang Ilustrador ng Kabataan (Ang InK).

You can be on For or By Kids too!

SEND US YOUR STORIES, POEMS, ESSAYS AND ART WITH SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE.

INCLUDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOURSELF AND A PICTURE.

SUPER YOYO
YO for it!
© HASHIGUCHI Takashi, Shogakukan, ShoPro, BANDAI
HYPER LEVEL COMPETITION
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
DEC 12-14 = CEBU CITY TOUR
DEC. 13-14 = TINSELTOWN KIDDIE FAIR Town Plaza Alabang Town Center
DEC. 14 = XMAS TOY FAIR' Carousel Court Festival Supermall, Alabang
DEC. 15 = KIDZ STATION GLORIETTA OPENING DAY Glorietta 4, Makati City
DEC. 16-18 = CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY TOUR
DEC. 17-21 = DAVAO CITY TOUR
DEC. 17-21 = THE GREAT CHRISTMAS TOY SHOW Megatrade Hall 2 SM Megamall
DEC. 18 = ROBINSONS PLACE ERMITA Activity Center
DEC. 20 = STORYLAND, SM Fairview
DEC. 21 = STORYLAND, SM Southmall
DEC. 27-28 = ILOILO CITY TOUR
JAN. 18 = HYPER LEVEL CHALLENGE Entertainment Plaza Foodcourt, SM North EDSA
MAR. 7 = FREESTLYE CHALLENGE
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Kids'r'rrific

MAC of all TRADES

Enter Mac Chan's world of piano lessons, basketball, medals and taekwondo

BLUE-BELTER Mac gives us a sample kick. RYAN LIM

By Eline Santos

TEN-year-old Mac plays the piano, is a taekwondo blue-belter, attends special math classes, and is a consistent honor student. But above all else, Mac Sherwin Chan loves basketball.

"I want to be a basketball player in the NBA or PBA," says the fourth-grader from Grace Christian High School, Quezon City. His favorite player is Kobe Bryant and he roots for the LA Lakers.

"They're very good!"

A member of the basketball club at school, Mac plays the game whenever he can.

"Everyday, when there's free time."

Mac is quite disciplined about his schedule. When he gets home, he does his homework. They don't watch TV during school nights so Mac goes to bed at 8 p.m. after dinner. On the weekend, it's either taekwondo training, piano lessons or math classes.

Mac is also a computer games aficionado. He saved up money to buy himself a Gameboy at a bargain price..

"Sometimes we buy stuff together," he says of his siblings. "Sometimes we share."

Over summer vacation, he helps out in their family business by packing their product into plastic bags while watching TV.

"I want to be hardworking like my parents," Mac says.

MAC does his homework everyday. But on weekends, it's game time. RYAN LIM

R RRIFIC?

'Rrific kids are smart
'Rrific kids are fun
Some aren't in the honors list
But get their homework done

Somehow the world's
a better place
I know this much is true
Hey 'Rrific kid!
We know you're there
We love you 'cause you're you!

If you think you're 'Rrific' or know someone who is, fill out the nomination form below and send it to:

Junior Inquirer
'KIDS'R'RRIFIC' Page
Phil. Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces
corner Yague & Mascardo Sts.
1231 Makati City

Chosen nominees will be featured on this page and will get a free Junior Inquirer T-shirt!

Kids'r'rrific
nomination form

✂

I nominate: ______________________

Age: ______________________

I think she's/he's 'Rrific because: (Here's a tip! Write a detailed description of a good deed, project or accomplishment by your nominee.)

____

She/he lives at ______________________

and studies at ______________________

Her/his contact number is: ______________________

Sender's Name: ______________________

Sender's Age & School: ______________________

Sender's Address: ______________________

Sender's Contact No. ______________________

ROMY HOMILLADA

RAMONA checks out the U.P. lantern parade. Getting ideas for future projects?

Ramona reads Ramona

She turns trash into art

By Eline Santos

ELEVEN-year-old Ramona Miral likes to make art. She uses pastels, paper cutting, and finger painting. She also recycles old materials.

"I use stuff from the house that are not used anymore," says the fifth-grader from Miriam College, Quezon City. Ramona doesn't like things to go to waste.

One of the school projects she enjoyed was turning old newspapers into a Christmas lantern.

The very first time Ramona joined an art contest she won second place. This was the contest of Unicef and the Council for the Welfare of Children called "Mundong Payapa, Handog sa Bata."

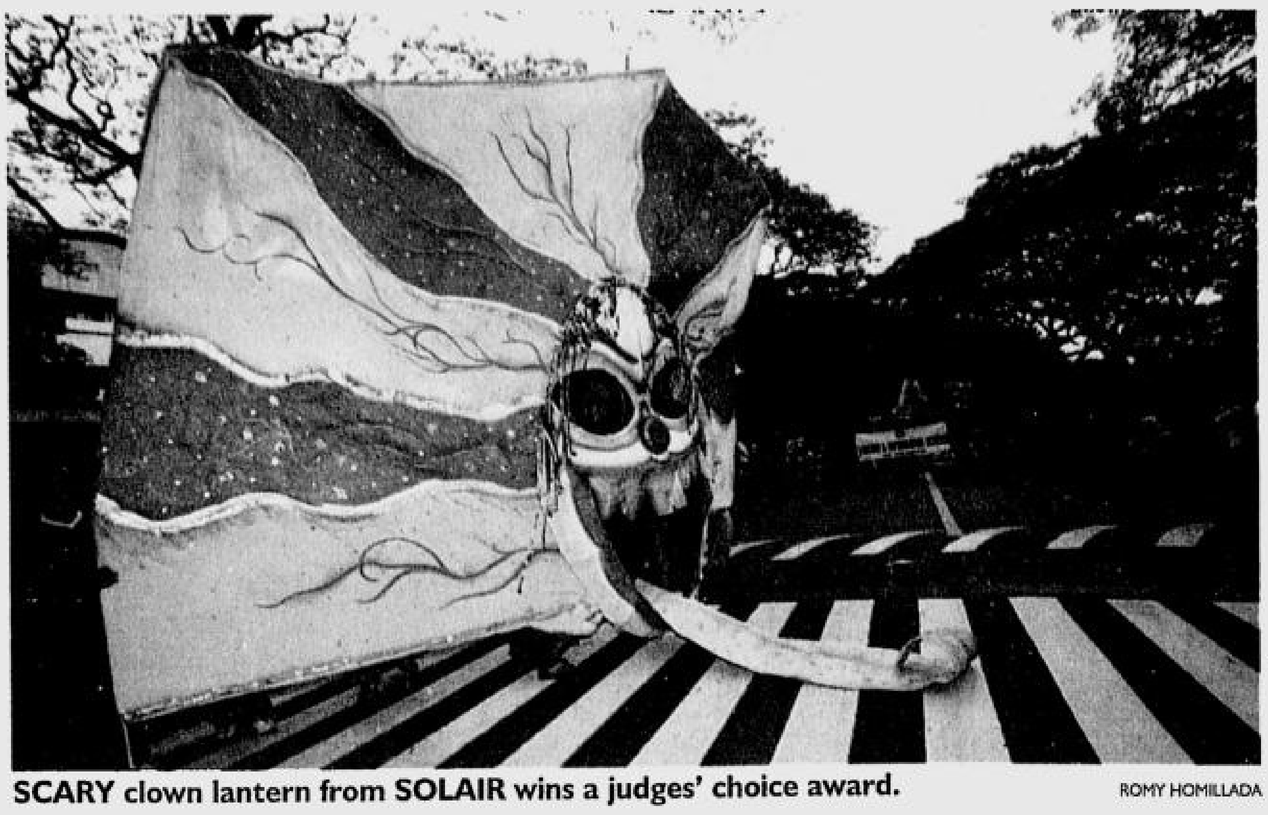
Ramona also loves a good read. She likes fantasy books like the "Chronicles of Narnia" and "Harry Potter." She also enjoys the works of Beverly Cleary and picks out Ramona Quimby as a favorite character.

"She's *makulit*. She experiences a lot of things. She's an average kid with a happy life," Ramona says.

The real-life Ramona also thinks of herself as pretty average. She likes science, writes good essays, and helps her classmates when they ask her for advice.

As for her art, she likes it because it serves as an outlet for her creativity.

"Express yourself," she says. "It's important to be able to say what's on your mind."



SCARY clown lantern from SOLAIR wins a judges' choice award. ROMY HOMILLADA

Giant Sea Creatures...

(from page 1)

on leaping through a "flaming" hoop of orange and yellow crepe paper, a white elephant, a unicyclist clown, and a giant crystal ball-gazing gypsy woman.

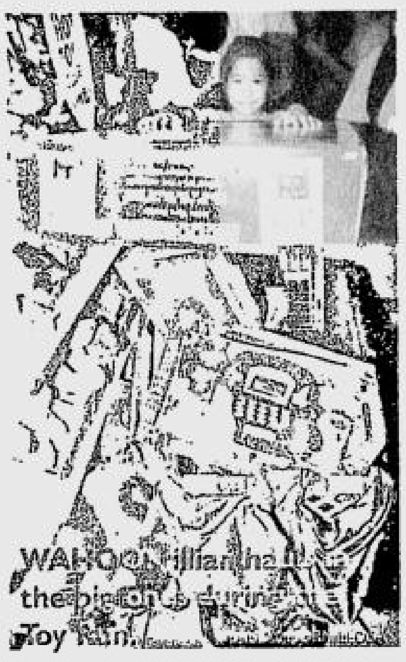
Everyone enjoyed *chicharon, taho*, ice cream, fish balls, and other food being sold on the grounds. Kids and adults put on glow sticks, blinking pendants, and Santa hats while watching the festivities. The night was capped by a beautiful display of fireworks.

ROMY HOMILLADA

JELLYFISH, starfish, everywhere a fish, fish.

Kids Win Big...

(from page 1)


WAHOO! Jillian
Toy Run.

Imagine that!

Joseph, Celina, Jillian and Julia Anne already accomplished their good deeds. Jillian gave some of her family's old clothes to the kids of poor families in Barangay La Paz, Makati.

Julia Anne, a 6th grader at St. Scholastica's College in Manila, collected old clothes, canned goods, and packets of instant noodles from her schoolmates to give to public school children from Taguig.

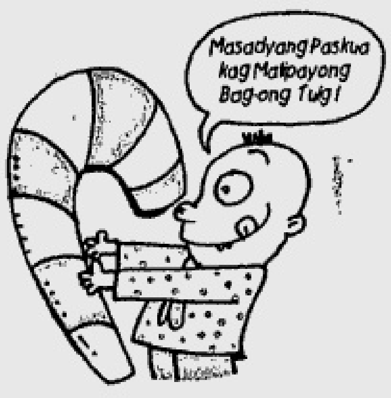
Finally, Karen pledged to help out with her mom's medical mission to a community in Silay, Bacolod. Her mom is a doctor at Makati Medical Center and St. Luke's Medical Center. Karen intends to do this summer next year.

"Doing stuff like these is really cool," Julia Anne said. She wrote a poem about her experience for her Big Help project entry.

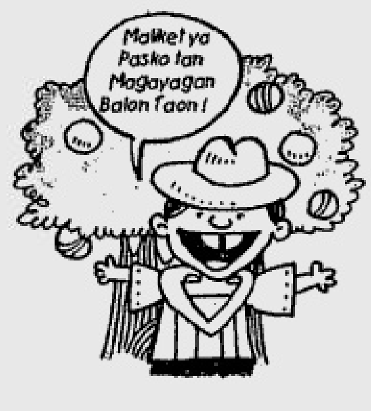
"I think it's important to try your best to help even when you don't have money," she said. "Even when you have little to share."

PINOY SPEAK!

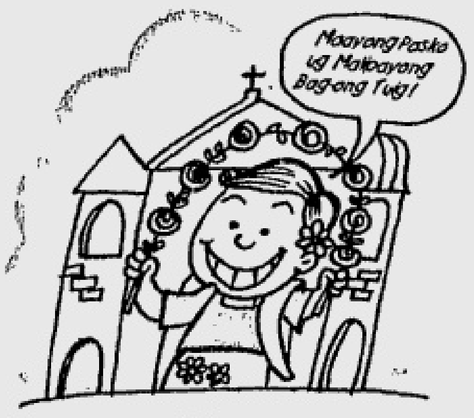
GOING home to the provinces for Christmas! Now you'll fit in like an ant in an ant hill! Check out these seven other ways to wish people a stupendous Christmas and spectacular New Year!


Masadyang Paskua kag Malipayong Bag-ong Tuig!

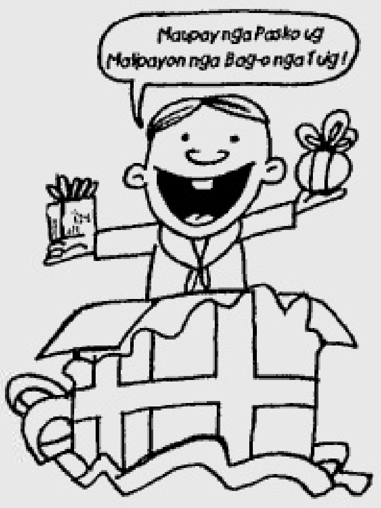
Hiligaynon


Maliket ya Pasko tan Magayagan Balon Taon!

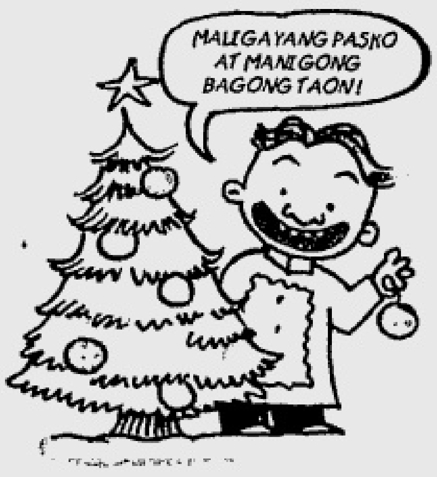
Pangasinan


Maayong Pasko ug Malipayong Bag-ong Tuig!

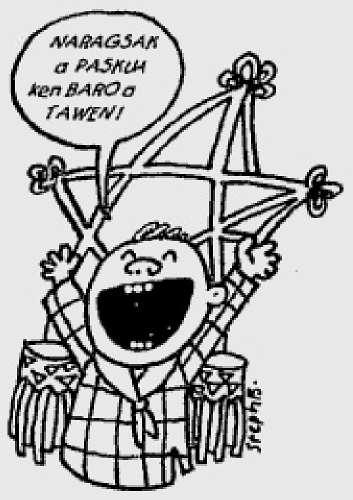
Cebuano


Maupay nga Pasko ug Malipayon nga Bag-o nga Tuig!

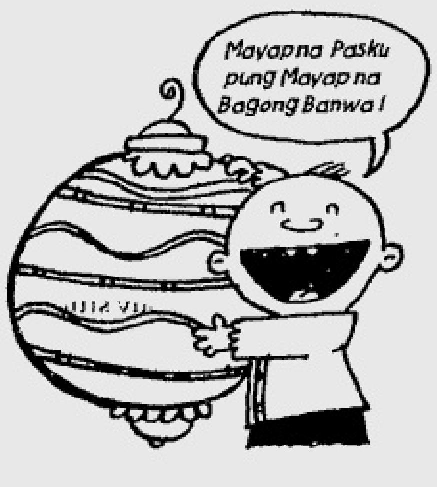
Samar-Leyte


MALIGAYANG PASKO AT MANIGONG BAGONG TAON!

Tagalog


NARAGSAK a PASKUA ken BARO a TAWEN!

Ilokano


Mayap na Pasku pung Mayap na Bagong Banwa!

Pampango

Family Day Lessons

(from page 1)

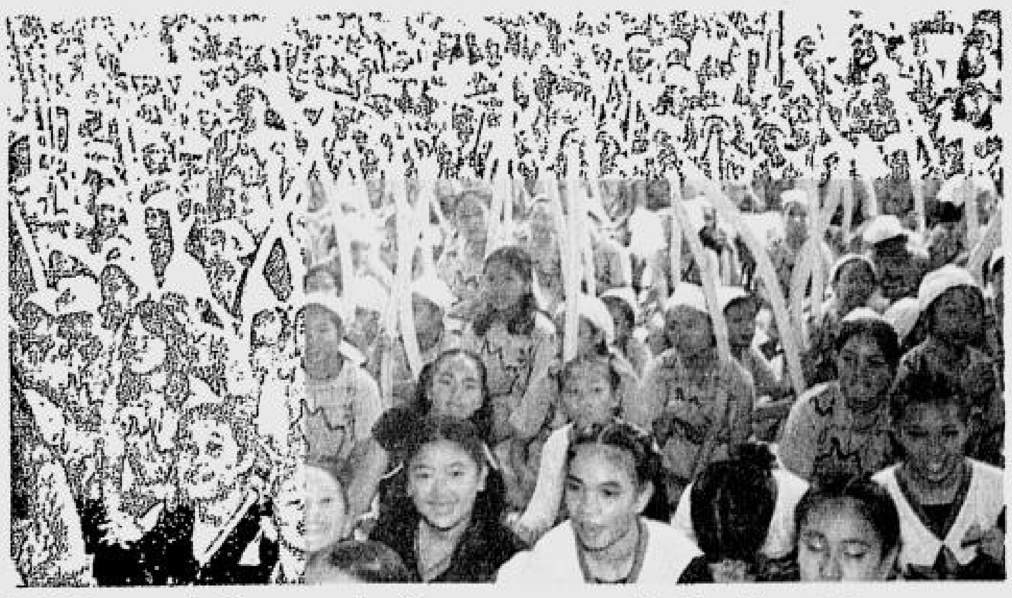
The Gold El Dorados made a pyramid formation with their youngest members.

Red Team Circus gave all their audience-members glittery mini pompoms to cheer with.

The Blue Titans showered the audience with blue and white balloons.

But it was the Green Voyagers with their dramatic ship-like entrance that won the cheer-dancing competition.

But it was the Red Team Circus which won over all.

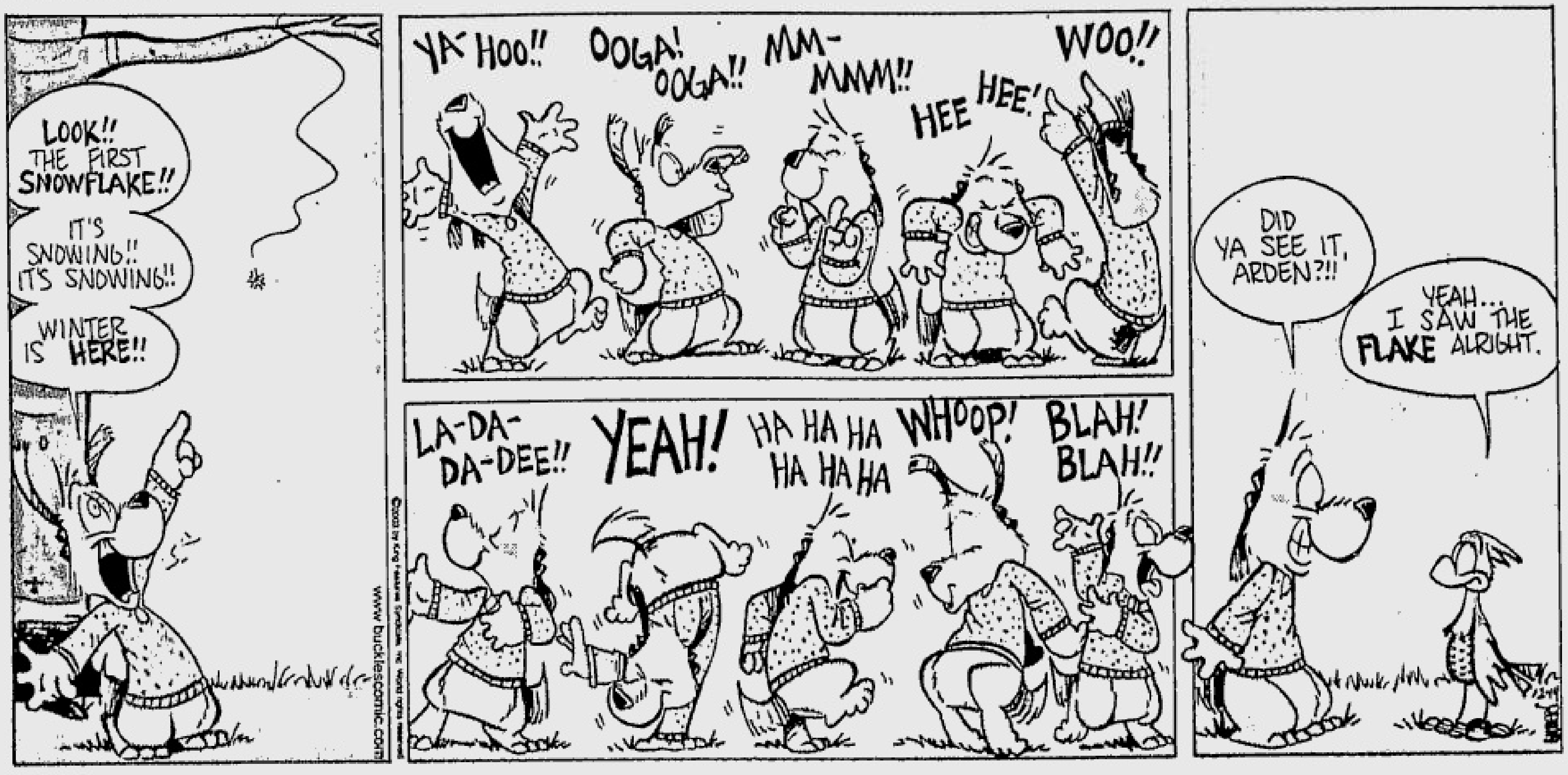


LONG green balloons make like ocean waves for the Voyagers. BETOY JOHNSON

RED Team Circus get ready to cheer. BETOY JOHNSON

BUCKLES

BY DAVID GILBERT


LOOK!! THE FIRST SNOWFLAKE!!
IT'S SNOWING!! IT'S SNOWING!!
WINTER IS HERE!!
YA-HOO!!
OOGA! OOGA!!
MM-MMM!!
HEE HEE!
WOO!!
LA-DA-DA-DEE!!
YEAH!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
WHOOP!
BLAH! BLAH!!
DID YA SEE IT, ARDEN?!!
YEAH... I SAW THE FLAKE ALRIGHT.
www.bucklescomic.com

Foodie!

Many kids said the best part about Family Fun Day was the food.

Christine said her must-have was cheese pizza. Red team third-grader Nicole Soriano picked cheese-flavored popcorn.

"I like the snowcone, blueberry flavor," said green team fifth-grader Marielle Belen.

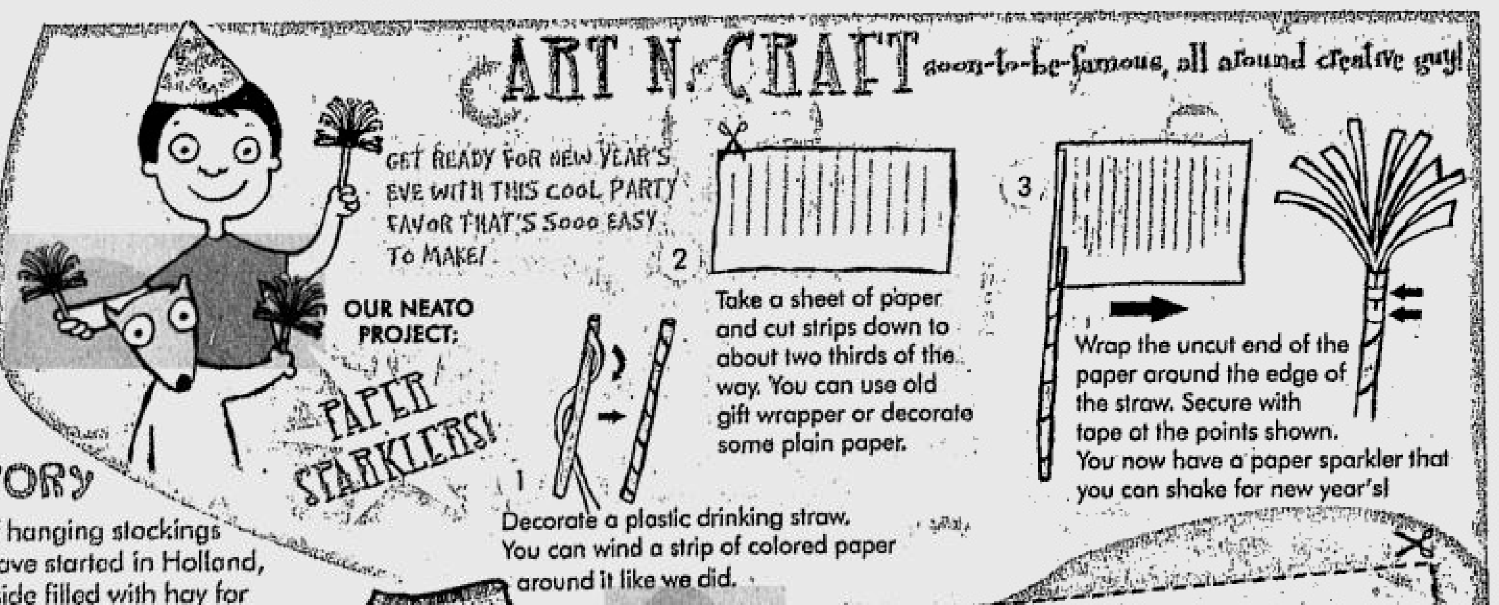
Spending time with family and friends was another thing kids enjoyed about the event.

"There's lots of games for my family members and there's a lot of things to buy," said sixth-grader Roseanne Real of the Green Voyagers.

"On Family Fun Day you get to spend time with family and friends. It's all about fun and relationships," said Aimee Lee, a fourth-grader El Dorado.

THE LUNCH BOX

by Katrina B. Villa


ART N CRAFT soon-to-be-famous, all around creative guy!
1
2
3

ART N CRAFT

GET READY FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH THIS COOL PARTY FAVOR THAT'S Sooo EASY TO MAKE!

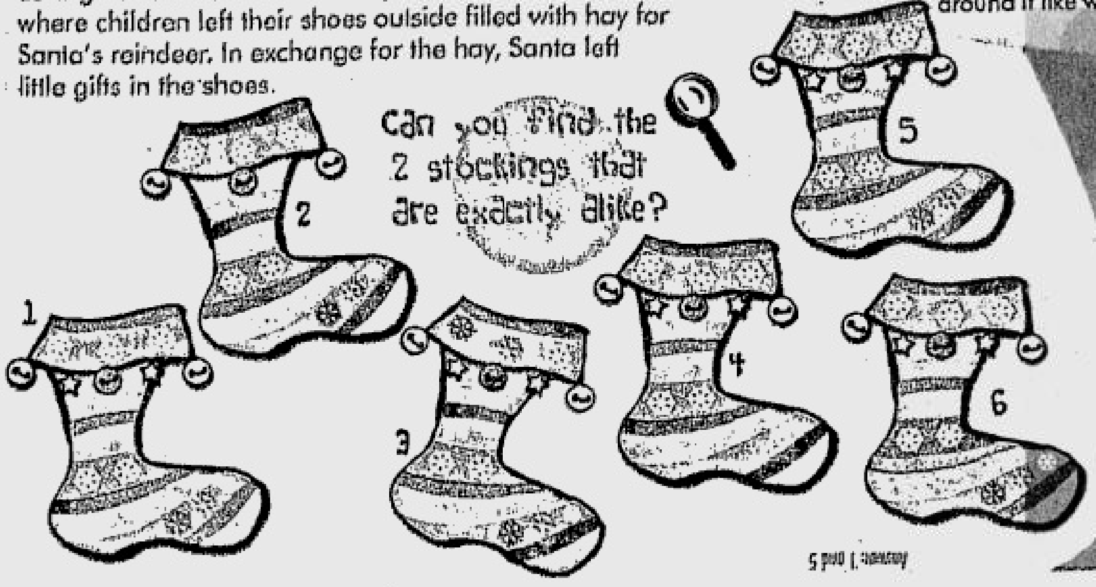
OUR NEATO PROJECT: PAPER SPARKLERS!

1. Decorate a plastic drinking straw. You can wind a strip of colored paper around it like we did.
2. Take a sheet of paper and cut strips down to about two thirds of the way. You can use old gift wrapper or decorate some plain paper.
3. Wrap the uncut end of the paper around the edge of the straw. Secure with tape at the points shown. You now have a paper sparkler that you can shake for new year's!

THE STOCKING STORY

Some countries have a tradition of hanging stockings during Christmas. The idea may have started in Holland, where children left their shoes outside filled with hay for Santa's reindeer. In exchange for the hay, Santa left little gifts in the shoes.

Can you find the 2 stockings that are exactly alike?



Answers: 1 and 5

QUICK! FILL THIS UP AND KEEP IT WITH YOU!

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

This New Year I Resolve:

____

____

____

Signed on ______ in ______
DATE PLACE

______ ______
NAME SIGNATURE

______
WITNESSED BY

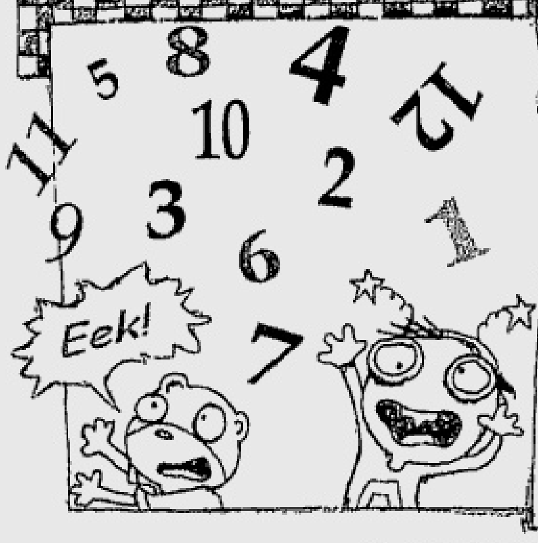
THUMBMARK

Atomo & Weboy BUDDHA BEAR

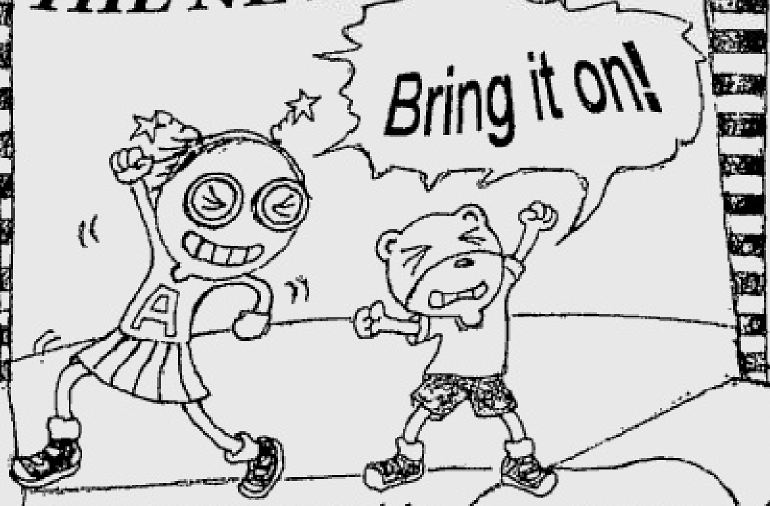
Atomo & Weboy Buddha Bear

By Lyra Abueg Garcellano

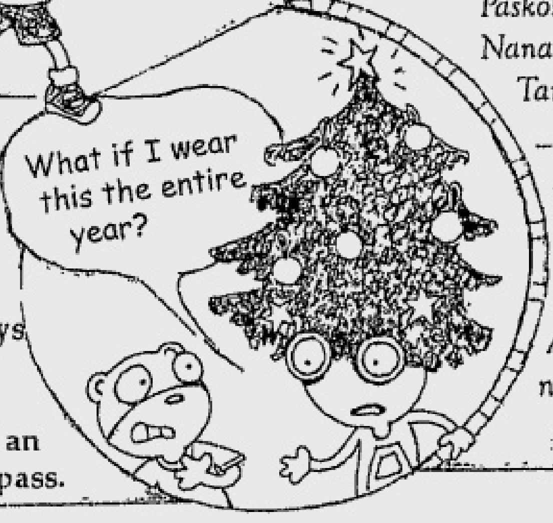
A) How many more days 'til you go back to school?
B) How many more days 'til 2004?
C) How many more days 'til you finish eating Noche Buena leftovers?
D) How many old friends did you see this holiday break?
E) How many more days before you start cleaning your room?
F) How much fruitcake did you eat this week?
G) How many holiday songs did you sing?
H) How many holiday songs do you know?


8
5
4
12
11
10
2
9
3
6
1
7
Eek!

ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEW YEAR?



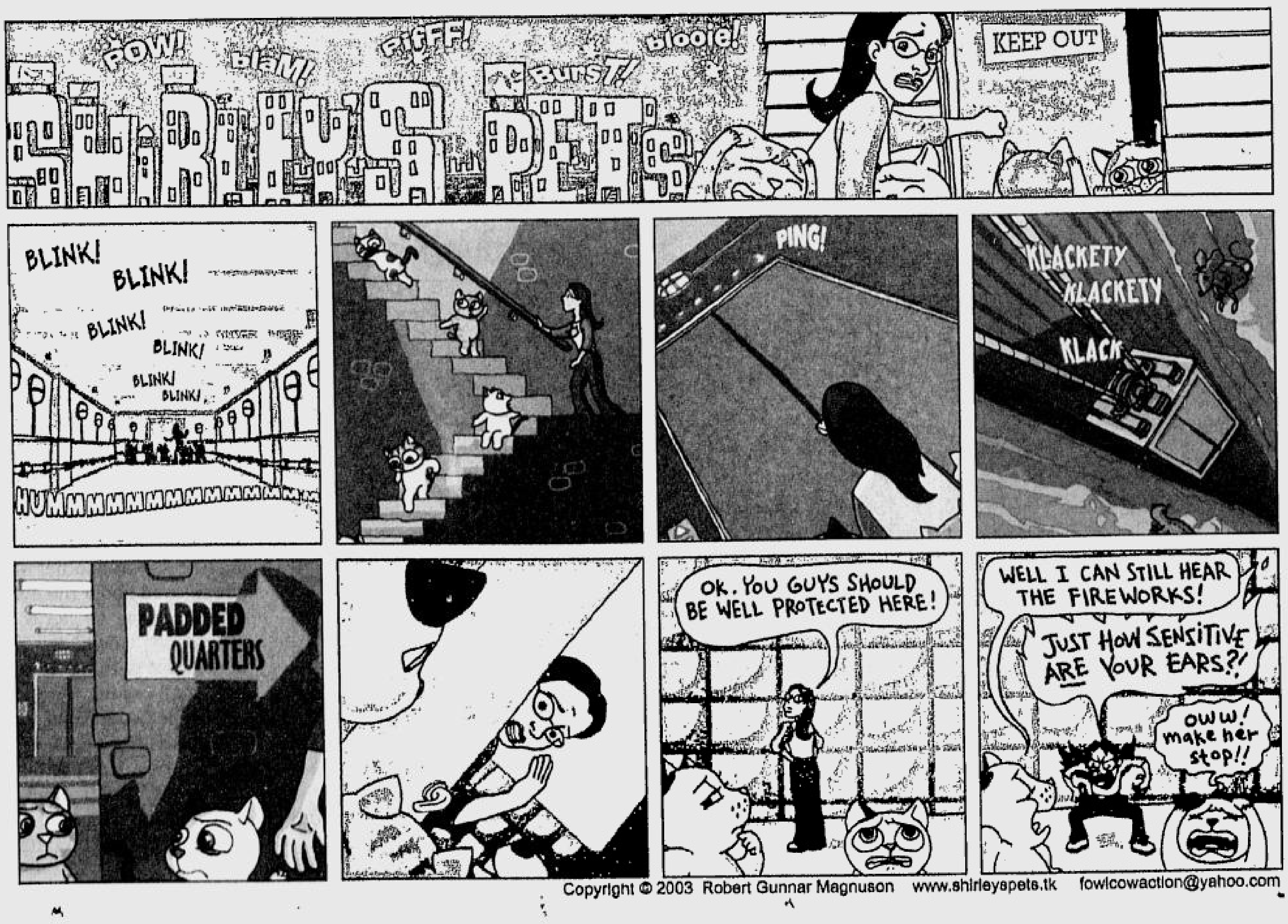
The holidays are one of the really stressfull times of the year. There's a lot of things to do, projects to finish and people to remember. Just keep in mind that the holidays aren't always about giving and receiving presents. It's also about giving thanks for an eventful year that's about to pass.


What if I wear this the entire year?

You know this ditty! Fill in the blanks!

Pasko na naman
o kay tulin ng _ _ _ _.
Paskong nagdaan
tila ba kung _ _ _ _ _ _ lang!
Ngayon ay _ _ _ _ _
dapat ay pasalamatan.
_ _ _ _ _ _ ay pasko tayo ay
mag-awitan!
Pasko! Pasko! Pasko!
Nanaman _ _ _ _.
Tanging araw nating
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
_ _ _ _ _!
Pasko! Pasko!
Pasko na naman
muli!
Ang _ _ _ _ _ _ _
naghahari!

Answers: araw, kailan, pasko, ngayon, muli, pinakamimithi, pagibig


POW!
blaM!
FifFF!
BursT!
blooie!
SHIRLEY'S PETS
KEEP OUT
BLINK!
BLINK!
BLINK!
BLINK!
BLINK!
BLINK!
HUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
PING!
KLACKETY
KLACKETY
KLACK
PADDED QUARTERS
OK. YOU GUYS SHOULD BE WELL PROTECTED HERE!
WELL I CAN STILL HEAR THE FIREWORKS!
JUST HOW SENSITIVE ARE YOUR EARS?!
oww! make her stop!!

Copyright © 2003 Robert Gunnar Magnuson www.shirleyspets.tk fowlcowaction@yahoo.com

OUT THERE

By Christine A. Paita

Got something for Out There? Send us the info two weeks in advance. Our fax number is 897-4794, and our e-mail address is ji@inquirer.com.ph.

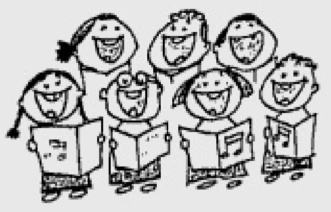
Contests

DRAW YOUR BIBLICAL HERO. Send your **original artwork** featuring Biblical characters from both the Old and New Testament to "Draw Your Hero" drawing contest. Winning entries will be shown on "Greatest Heroes and Legends of the Bible" on RPN 9, every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more info, call Areen or Don at 759-6340 local 113 or 117.

TAMIYA CAR RACE. Get ready to race with your Tamiya car in the **Let's & Go! Tamiya M4WD Car Racing**. Kids aged 6 to 12 can join the Junior Division. The top three winners from the weekly races will join the grand finals on Jan. 11, 2004. For more info, call Creative Products Corporation at 725-0901or 725-0793.

Events

ANGELS OF HOPE. Listen to the angelic voices of the **Sampaguita Performing Group** on the following dates: Dec. 27 at Kidz World in Dasmariñas, Cavite; Dec. 28 at Storyland, SM Fairview, Novaliches; Dec. 29 at Dreamscape, Robinsons Galleria; Dec. 30 at SM Megamall; Dec. 31 at SM North Edsa; and Jan. 1 at Enchanted Kingdom in Laguna. For ticket inquiries, call 724-4832.



A KIDDIE HOLIDAY. Festival Supermall in Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang celebrates the holidays with kids! Be part of its **storytelling and art sessions** on Dec. 27, 28, and 30. Admission is free. For more info on Christmas events, please call Customer Service at 850-3514 or visit www.festivalsupermall.com.

Club

BE A SCIENCE CLUBBER. Calling all science clubs and science club advisers of elementary and high schools in the country, the **Philippine Society of Youth Science Clubs, Inc. (PSYSC)** is extending its deadline for membership campaign until Dec. 30. Join the club's annual summer camps, interactive workshops, leadership trainings, quiz shows, and environmental rescues. For inquiries, call 920-8174 or 920-9561 or email psysc_inc@hotmail.com.